

SWINDON & DISTRICT GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS
www.swindondrivers.com
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Newsletter
May 2005

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Disclaimer

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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

First of all apologies that this Newsletter is arriving with you later than normal, traditionally it would have been issued at the May Group Night, the balance being posted out shortly after.

Following the February newsletter we received an e-mail from one of our Members, Ray Doughty, proposing "an alternative point of view" to some of the things we are doing in the Group. We often ask for feedback and are regularly disappointed, so upon receiving this input your Committee embraced it.

After discussions with Ray, we agreed to arrange a meeting to discuss the issues raised and took the unusual step of sending out letters to 122 of our members inviting all to attend a meeting on 25th April. By administrative oversight, rather than by design, invites went out only to full members only, Associates were omitted but should have been included.

The statistics concerning the communication tell a story

48 (39%) of members responded to the letter - of these

21 (17%) indicated they would either definitely attend or would endeavour to.

9 (7%) gave comments for consideration.

16 (13%) attended the meeting including 10 regular Group Night attendees.

Thank-you to those who responded.

Despite an initial mix up with rooms and facilities at BHH, the meeting went well and a number of ideas on how Swindon Group could move forward were brainstormed. Issues of purpose and objectives were raised, along with strengths and weaknesses.

At the 9th May Committee Meeting these matters were discussed, and our most recent Group statement of objectives and targets (dating back to September 2002) was reaffirmed as still valid. We agreed to adopt some actions with immediate effect and one thing you should see in this newsletter is a more detailed description of future Group Night events. Further meetings are planned.

This Newsletter was delayed to allow some of the outcome from the various meetings to be included, as you will read later. We are also publishing a shortened version of Ray's original e-mail. My personal view is that only positive comes out of such navel gazing, and I hope this openness inspires others to contribute and join the Committee.

Talking of which I need to give you a reminder and also some unfortunate news. This is my third term as Chairman and in line with IAM Group Rules I will be standing down and not presenting myself for re election at the September AGM. Now to the unfortunate news, due to personal commitments Phil Pomeroy, our Associate Rep / Membership Secretary has had to stand down with immediate effect. In the short term Les Brown (Senior Observer) has agreed to act as caretaker in the important role of allocating Associates to Observers for their runs and generally being there for both parties should issues arise. The result is we need new Committee Members, September will soon be with us so please think about this now and come forward.

This last few months has brought with it some other interesting developments in motoring, to name one the introduction, on 13th April, of speed enforcement on the M4 by the Wiltshire and Swindon Road Safety Partnership. Our timing could not have been better in that we had the Partnership scheduled to be at our Group Night at Blunsdon on 4th May! For this visit they set up in the car park and explained and demonstrated their equipment. Everyone was given the opportunity to handle the kit and speed check a target vehicle carefully driven by one of the Officers present. Everyone who attended went away with a better understanding of the modus operandi of the Partnership.

Safe driving

Mark Simpson

AN ALTERNATIVE POINT OF VIEW

Why Did I Join the IAM?

I applied to do the "Skill For Life course" in Autumn 2001. I was 60, in a very senior job, and doing 45000 miles each year. I didn't want to go downhill with age, stress, or a combination of both and the course offered both the training and an assessment in exchange for 75 quid. Just what I needed!

After an early first drive with Kirsty I was handed over to Les Brown and, under his very experienced supervision I promptly got worse due entirely to being supervised in-car for the first time in many years. However I came out the other side and passed my test with a retired Traffic Policeman in Devizes, who actually said "with your maturity and manner, you would make an excellent observer"

Now, had someone approached me at that time I would have said "yes". I know I would, and somehow would have fitted it in. What happened, however, was that the next Newsletter carried not a line of congratulation - I never got that bit - but a few lines of chastisement about people who can't even be bothered to come and be presented with their certificate. Nobody asked why, but I had very good reasons at that time which I won't go into.

Anyway, I had lifted my standard and my confidence and that was what was promised and what I wanted. That was the deal. It was what I had contracted for. I knew my working hours and place of work would never allow me to attend local meetings, but I was happy to pay a tenner to sort of support the cause.

So What Stops Me From Participating Locally?

Primarily time. My lifestyle doesn't leave a lot for outside commitments, but there are two other factors;

From time to time the same chastisements slip into the magazine, usually telling us how hard some people work and it's all down to them..... you know all that. But it doesn't do a lot for me, and maybe a few others as well.

The events need to be sold. I spent half my life in sales and marketing, and as a senior sales manager we often held meetings for our customers. The agenda would be totally pertinent to their business, indeed their survival in a tough industry, and there was free food. And, if we didn't chase and chase and phone and remind they simply didn't turn up. That is how life is now, with the pace that many people operate at. And what do you do? You say "...2nd March, British Horse Society" Now, will that really make me change my diary to get back from some distant location? You haven't even explained what it is about, then you'll wonder why not many turn up !!

What Could Be Done About It?

First of all, ban articles from the magazine that chastise people because we are not fitting in with how you would like it to be - like it was 30 years ago. The pace and style of life has changed, and along with it peoples expectations. And its rude.

Do you know what your customers want? They obviously didn't want a BBQ in Savernake forest, because if they did they would have come to it. You, the Committee, decided to give them a BBQ, probably because you always have done. And it's a lovely thought, but you have to get their commitment first.....So if you keep giving them what you think they need I am afraid you will be continually disappointed.

So Why Not Hold a Workshop?

Hold a workshop made up of non-attendees and find out how the group could be lifted? You might be surprised at what comes out of it. Do you think Richard Branson solves problems by holding Committee Meetings? Of course not. He gets a load of go-ahead people together and pulls out some new and vibrant ideas. That's what you need to do.

The Lasting Effect

Did my training and test have a lasting effect? You bet it did! As far as I am concerned, Les is always beside me and I try never to let him down. I am very proud of my membership, and have encouraged many others to join, I just don't get to the meetings.

Ray Doughty

An Alternative Point of View - Your Committee's Response

We received Ray Doughty's e-mail and discussed in at our March Committee meeting. It would have been easy to see it as an unwanted aggravation and hit the "delete" key, but after all our attempts and encouragements to get feedback from Members we saw this more as manna from heaven!

We responded to Ray inviting to set up and facilitate the meeting he proposed, and in an unprecedented move mailed our membership individually notifying of the meeting, the reason behind it, and encouraging participation and/or feedback. I have referred to the statistics on response to the letter in my Ramblings, and will not repeat them here.

The "25th April" Town Hall meeting as we refer to it, went well and Ray used syndicate exercises to pose a number of questions to the attendees; strengths; weaknesses; why people don't attend meetings; how to encourage more to attend. Everyone contributed and we actually ran out of time!

I repeat below the items highlighted by each syndicate group, followed in italics by the possible actions discussed by Committee at our May Committee meeting.

Swindon Group Workshop - 25th April 2005

WHAT ARE THE WEAKNESSES OF THE SWINDON GROUP?

Lack of projection

*Membership "Welcome" pack for new Associates
Use of Evening Advertiser to notify of group Meetings
Notice at BHH, inviting all comers
Newsletter content, details of forthcoming events
Group events in IAM Magazine*

Clear statement of purpose

See Sept 2002 presentation, we believe we have covered both IAM Chiswick, and local Group objectives.

-What happens after "we" pass?

*Opportunities of some form of further development
Skills development (becoming Observers, further training,
skidpan etc)
Informative Group Night presentations / external visits*

Lack of reception - doorkeeper?

*"Welcome" pack and talk through of contents by Committee
"Buddy" on first evening.*

Communication

-are quarterly newsletters enough?

Or too many if we cant get the right content!

-maximise I.T.

*Agreed, e-mail addresses to be sought
Use to remind of meetings / speakers c. 1 week prior to Group
Night
Promote Website as source of Group Information
Use of random e-mail to gauge response to attendance of
Group night / Newsletter content.*

Social events should be family orientated

Agreed

Newsletter content?

*Refreshers on Advanced Driving Techniques (based on PYADT
or Road Craft)
Local / National information - careful not to duplicate IAM
magazine
What's on in Swindon related to Advanced Motoring*

WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS OF THE SWINDON GROUP?

High pass rate

Stable core group - 15 to 20 people

Stable observer corps

Wednesday speakers good - motoring focus

Very good venue

WHY DO YOU FEEL THAT PEOPLE DON'T ATTEND LOCAL MEETINGS?

Group age profile

Various National initiatives to encourage younger, more vulnerable, drivers, with limited level of success

We get our share of young associates, how to get them along and keep hold of them?

Content of meeting, Newsletters etc should be relevant.

Logistics

Other responsibilities / interests

Club meeting style - old fashioned

People don't like commitment

What's in it for me -balance payback v costs

Content should be more valuable (relevant / interesting)

Content sometimes not relevant

Dealt with previously

Doesn't feel friendly, intimidating

"Welcome" pack and "Buddy" approach

Observers as well as Committee to have identification badges

Photo board of Committee / observers at Group Nights.

Day of meeting - clashes

Joiners are joiners / priorities

Meeting doesn't meet reasons for attending

Relevant content

Skills for life - not joining a club, but buying a skill

Yes, and one that the Group can help you further develop.

LAST SESSION - HOW TO GET MORE PEOPLE ALONG?

This session was just open debate, and produced the following key comments;

Clarify mission statement

We have one, need to communicate it positively - Newsletter and Website

Clarify vision

We have a Group Vision, need to communicate it - Newsletter & Website

Cater for varying audience age, and therefore meeting style, i.e.; one group want swish university style presentation with lots of IT and colour whilst the other want a couple of hours talking through a subject

Do we actually want more people there? If so, why?

Opportunity to network with like minded individuals and increase knowledge

It is a fact that you can't easily get people to meetings these days
Newsletter needs to be far more descriptive of forthcoming events
Agreed, will be adopted in future Newsletters.

Meetings monthly, quarterly, or what?

At this stage continue monthly, we do have a willing regular attendance

The meeting helps the relationship between the candidate / observer

Yes, Observers should actively encourage their Associates to attend

MS to attend next Observers Meeting on 23rd May 2005

Does it help recruit / identify Observers?

Belief is NO, potential Observers identified by Observers and Examiner.

Bring a friend?

We should encourage, this is also true of the Associate Guidance Course

Are we trying to expand beyond 100 members?

Yes in line with IAM (and Group) Objectives

Share key skills between regions?

*Concept to be discussed with Regional Coordinator.
Build relationships - distribution of newsletters to other Groups*

Share some meetings with other regions?

We have tried to arrange joint events with Oxford in the past without success, to be further considered and investigated.

Need questionnaire - what do people want?

We have asked this question many, many, many, times, most recently in the 122 letters that were sent out to notify of the 25th April meeting.

All in all, many interesting opportunities! So, next steps ?

I have a meeting scheduled with Ray in early June and we will be arranging another "Town Hall" meeting. All are welcome, those who previously attended will receive automatic notification of the date, if you would like to attend please drop an e-mail to swindongroup@hotmail.com to register your interest. Even if you might be unable to attend, but would like to support the idea raised during the workshop on communications, please drop us a line so we have your up to date e-mail address.

More in the next Newsletter

Mark Simpson

FROM YOUR CHIEF OBSERVER

Safety & Security

One item that has cropped up lately is 'Safety & Security' in and around the 'Motorist'!

At the Observer's Meeting recently I stated that I was surprised how far drivers were from their vehicle when deciding to activate their 'Remote' when returning to their vehicle. (This was also discussed at the very informative and interesting talk given by David Douch at the June meeting - see Page 30).

I am of the opinion that it is wise, when approaching your vehicle, (especially in a unfamiliar or suspect area, or indeed at any time), to be within a metre or so of your vehicle, to look around and if you decide it is unsafe or suspect, then choose another course of action for a moment.

If you are some distance from your vehicle, once you have activated your 'Remote', then anyone with criminal intent is aware of your vehicle and the stature of the driver, they can then decide what type of 'Target' you are!

If you are close and then activate the 'Remote', you can quickly enter your vehicle, lock the doors and be relatively safe!

I personally take a look around when I leave my home to enter my garage to start any journey and even on return, I look around for anything suspicious before I decide on the course of action I take.

I live in a very quiet area, but you never know and I do try to be prepared, and so should you!!!

The theft of car keys in burglaries and violent robberies is rising because Anti-Theft devices are so efficient and as technology improves some car thieves are prepared to go to any lengths to obtain our vehicles!

Be safe! On the Road and Off the Road!

Supplement to Chris Gleed's Article -

Have your car serviced regularly to minimise the risk of breakdown.

- Check that the petrol cap is of the lockable type.
- Never allow the petrol tank level to fall below a quarter full - ideally keep the tank full.
- Use your garage if you have one and always ensure that it is locked.
- When parked and unattended do not leave your vehicle sunroof even partially open. At night, try to park in a well lit area.
- Lock your car whenever you leave it even for short periods and at filling stations.
- When stationary or in slow moving traffic, close windows and sunroof where possible to deter opportunist thieves.
- Lock valuable items (including mobile phones) out of sight before setting off on your journey and remove them from the car when parked.
- Never give lifts or open doors to, for example, strange men and/or unknown women even if they are wearing a smart uniform.
- If stopped by officials (police etc) ask for identification if unsure of their status.
- If you are threatened whilst in your car, try to remain calm and keep the vehicle moving if possible. If stationary call for help using your mobile phone. Close your windows and lock the doors. Switch on headlights, hazard warning lights and use the horn to draw attention. If the threat persists, drive to the nearest police station.

TYRES: (Cars)

We all know that the Minimum Legal Tread Depth required by Law is 1.6 mm across the central $\frac{3}{4}$ of the tyre tread width and around the entire outer circumference of the tyre. (or do we!)

There is now compelling evidence by MIRA Ltd, that braking performance deteriorates in the wet when the tyre tread drops below 3mm. Roadsafe, (Road Safety Organisation), and MIRA Ltd are advising that motorists should check and change their tyres at 3mm. Very good advice indeed in my opinion! Do you agree!

Brake & Gear Overlap -That old favourite! This crops up very often on Test and I see quite a lot of it on Pre-Test drives.

Lots of new drivers use 'overlap' all the time. But as 'Advanced Drivers' we need to demonstrate the Separation Technique', which means, 'one thing at a time'!

Many Associates, (and Observers!!!) do not plan ahead early enough, especially prior to the 'Left' turn. Remember, Information, Position, Speed, Gear, Acceleration!

The Mirror Check, The Signal, The Position - The control of your speed, (get that speed down and the foot off of the brake or use the correct amount of 'Acceleration Sense' or a combination of both!) , The Selection of the appropriate gear for that speed, (generally about 10 mph), this should be completed by about 2 to 3 car lengths prior to the junction so that the foot is off the clutch and the hand is away from the gear lever and back on the steering to complete the turn, under FULL control. Don't forget to take a good look into your new area of road before you commit to applying the power.

If your vehicle is moving and you still have your foot on the brake when you are changing gear...You are Overlapping!

Do you want to be a 'Better Driver' or an 'Advanced Driver'? Observers and Associates! Please try to get this right. You know it makes sense!

Chris Gleed

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S NOTES

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 comes available.

Graeme Fearon	Carol Darby	Andrew Dawson
John Sergeant	Russell Bowdrey	Sanjeevan Singh
Shauna Meredith	Rebecca Kershaw	Matthew Burley

Test Passes

We would like to congratulate the following who have passed their Advanced Driving Test, and invite them to become full members of the Swindon Group. We would also like to thank the Observers for the time and dedication that they put in to assist the Associate becoming Advanced Drivers

Geoff Whittaker on 11th November	Observed by Mike Newman
Robert Stewart on 24th November	Observed by Derek Sheldrake
Michael Whittaker on 3rd December	Observed by Cynthia Howard
Andy Rawlings on 15th December	Observed by Graham Mearns
Kieran Smyth on 16th December	Observed by Albert Webb
Serena Cooper on 22nd December	Observed by Dave Abbott
Deborah Telfer on 12th March	Observed by Chris Glead
Paul Murphy on 30th April	Observed by Mark Ellis
Suzanne Wright on 17th May	Observed by Derek Sheldrake

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Regional 1 - Region Co-ordinator Officer

Earlier this year Helen Schofield stepped down as Region 1 - RCO. She has not abandoned the IAM but has taken up a new role supporting her local Group.

Lona Williams has now taken up the RCO position and her background is having joined the IAM in 1990, went on to become an Observer, then a Senior Observer and served the Committee in various post. She moved to Caerphilly some five years ago and joined the Cardiff Group again serving on the Committee. Going on from there she became Region 1 Liaison Forum Secretary so has gained a great insight of what people expect and gain from being an IAM member.

Lona has agreed to come to Swindon on 7th September to support our AGM, which we hope will be a well attended evening.

IAM Membership Fees

We recently received a memorandum from IAM Head Office, London confirming revisions to annual membership fees.

With effect from 1st February 2005 the annual IAM membership fee (which excludes Swindon Group membership) increased from £15.00 to £18.00 (£14.50 to £17.50 for direct debit).

At the National Conference in October last, The Chief Executive announced that until further notice Skill for Life will remain at £85.00 (£75.00 for 25's and under) which of course includes in its make-up an element for the first years membership with the IAM absorbing the £3.00 until the Skill for Life total price is reviewed for other reasons

Debbie Herbert
Group Secretary

IAM MEMBERS DAYS 2005

The most recently organised day for IAM members, was held on Saturday 14th May at the **Heritage Motor Centre, Gaydon**. I went along with my husband Keith as navigator as you were permitted to take friends and family. Having paid the £9.50 we were sent tickets with good directions on.

We arrived just after 10 am. Going up to the Kestrel Suite where coffee and biscuits were still being served. Shortly after Bryan Davis gave a short welcome speech, thanking everyone for attending and running through the day's events.

We started off by buying tickets at £4.00 each for the 4x4 off road drive in a Freelander. The transfer shuttle was suitable for young children but having experience the off road drive would not recommend to anyone under the age of 14, although a girl of about 12 seemed rather keen to start. We sat facing each other, side on in the back with only normal lap belts to keep us from rocking and we "rocked" for a good 10 minutes up and down the track. Some parts filled with water and another stretch made up concrete circles to drive over.

We declined the 15 laps around the Go-kart track although we did stand and watch (the sun came out at that time). Taking part was the DCM (Divisional Council Member) Paul Gillett and Region 2 Co-ordinator Lorna. Look out for the pictures in the summer issue of the IAM Magazine.

Heading back into the museum we had about an hour to walk around the centre. There are over 200 historic British cars on display from the earliest Austin Seven to the latest Aston Martin. The museum has the first and last Minis ever build and the Monte Carlo rally winning Mini Coopers. Existing out via the shop, which had a good selection of items for sale. Buffet lunch was laid out in the Kestrel Suite with more coffee and thank you speeches to those that had organized the day.

The next organised event is a trip on Sunday 12th June to the **Sammy Miller Motorcycle Museum** in New Milton, Hampshire. Tickets are £5.00, which again will include lunch and admission to the Museum, and are available by phoning the General Office (IAM House) 020 8996 9600.

One further afield, which would be ideal if taking a motoring holiday to Scotland would be the visit to the **Lakeland Motor Museum**, Holker Hall, Cumbria. This takes place on Saturday 3rd September, priced at £10.00 including lunch and entrance fee.

We should remember these special events are organized especially for IAM members. IAM House are also encouraging the local groups to get together to celebrate the 50th Anniversary year in 2006 so any suggestions would be gratefully received.

Debbie Herbert

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IAM REGION 1 SPRING MEETING

The Region 1, Spring Meeting was held on 23rd April at BAWA, Bristol. Front table were seated Christopher Bullock - Chief Executive, George Goldie OBE - Chair NGC, Bryan Davis - DCM, Andy Poulton & Mike Lovelock - Staff Examiners, Lona Williams - RCO, Tim Soper - Motorcycle Advisor, Bruce Ferguson - RCO 3, Andrew Nicholls - Bristol Group Chairman, and Helen Schofield as Guest.

The room was then made up with representatives from 23 other Groups from Western & Mendip down to Plymouth.

Bryan announced it has been a cracking year with thanks to all concerned. Lona welcomed the two new groups, the Plymouth M/C and Wilts & Bath M/C group stating the under Region 1 we now have 28 Groups. Two awards were given out firstly to the Camelot Group for the Most Improved Road Safety this was sponsored by IAM House the second award went to John Mansergh, Region 1 Treasurer for the last 12 months hard work and appreciation. If anyone has interesting news for the summer edition of Advanced Driving Magazine, please could it be forwarded to Lona as soon as possible.

During the rest of the morning various speakers stood up to give talks on how groups take associates through observing to test standard and most present agreed that classroom sessions off the road, brought about a better understanding of "driving to the book". Bryan advised IAM House would like to produce a CD with IAM Logo. Suggesting like Who Wants to be a Millionaire, question and 4 answers and if wrong answer given, at the bottom of page directs you to the right page of the Highway Code Book. This could then be copied by all groups and distributed to the new associates.

After lunch Richard Kendall and Billy Burnes from the Bristol Group of Advanced Motorcyclist continued the theme on training and road safety. This was then followed by Andy Poulton talking on reasons why associated fail: Arrive "just in time", fail to bring along driving licence, wearing very heavy overcoat so restricting movement, wheels on lock to name a few. Andy also advised candidate to "BEHAVE" when on way to test as he has even been passed by someone speeding only to find he is carrying out the test.

Out on the test more red lights are being passed, poor anticipation, more mirror checks along with braking and gear changing, road positioning on approach to and through bends finally Andy advises us all to appreciate our actions with regards to other road users.

Christopher Bullock gave a Strategic Review, he was happy that the Region was doing very well, overall this year test applications for cars was up 12% and the bikes were up by 37%. He went over some ideas for the next 5 years some of which are still awaiting Board approval. The briefing for Groups stated that :

- **The IAM will keep** its charity status and charitable objective*
(*Original (and current) IAM charitable objects: to improve the standard of driving and for the advancement of road safety and to establish an advanced driving test)
- **Expansion of the charitable objectives :**
 - 1) **Be relevant to a greater proportion of road users**
New methods of recruiting more who will become IAM members, and of engaging with those who will not
 - 2) **Be more influential in the promotion and development of road safety**
Increase commitment to influencing policy and practice
- **Proposed new strategic objectives and ambitions:**

Within 5 Years, the IAM will:

 - 1) Be double its current size (total income and membership)
 - 2) Be influencing the road-using behaviours of at least 10% of people on the road, whether by direct education or through other communication and awareness programmes.
 - 3) Be a major influence in the development and promotion of new road safety ideas - and policy at all levels of Government.

OUR NEW FUTURE
Within 5 years, an IAM which will be:

Bigger

Better

More influential ...for road safety

Before closing his speech, Christopher went through some of the Strengths and Weaknesses of the IAM - The Weaknesses he thought were that people convinced that the IAM was "Not relevant for me" - Test preparation done by volunteers and that actually taking a test was a barrier to entry. The strengths being: Very high standards - Quality image - Aspirations - Contribution to road safety and that a lot of the work was actually done by volunteers.

Christopher then closed once again thanking everyone for attending with a reminder of the National Conference being held on the 8 October 2005 at Wolverhampton.

I'm sure over the next few years we will again see some new changes. Our Group is working on changing the front cover of our newsletter, to highlight next years 50th Anniversary of IAM.

If any of our Members would like to attend the National Conference in October, please let either Mark (Chair) or Debbie (Group Sec.) know. It is obviously after our AGM in September but we are still keen to take down names of anyone interested.

Swindon Group 35 Years On

On 1st July our Group will have been in existence for 35 years. To put this into historical context we must remember that in 1970 Britain was a very different place. Introduction of the new decimal currency would not take place until the following year. In politics Edward Heath's newly elected Government promised to take Britain into the European Economic Community. Meanwhile US President Richard Nixon pursued peace talks in an attempt to end America's war in Vietnam. There were only three television channels and colour television had only recently been introduced - Jon Pertwee had just completed his first series as the third Doctor Who - its first colour series. The No 1 single was "In the Summertime" by Mungo Jerry. On the football field Brazil were the new world champions following the Mexico World Cup Finals in June that year.

Locally the population of Swindon stood at 91,000 after 17 years of planned growth, with new areas such as Dorcan, Liden and Eldene still at the planning stage, and further expansion at West Swindon on the distant horizon. An eventual population of 250,000 - 300,000 was still envisaged (170,000 today). Major local employers included British Rail Engineering, Plessey Semiconductors and Vickers Limited. The office boom was yet to come. It may be hard to believe now, but the section of the M4 passing Swindon was still under construction at this time and would not open until December 1971.

New cars launched this year included the Range Rover, (the first example of which can be seen in the Heritage Motor Centre at Gaydon), the Hillman Avenger, Ford Cortina Mk III and the Triumph Stag. This was also the year that production of the Morris Minor finally ceased.

Writing in the Group's first Newsletter that autumn editor Bruce Edgington noted that although the new group committee was established and working well it was essential that the group reached the minimum IAM requirement of 40 members as soon as possible - in fact the names and addresses of all 34 current members were individually listed in the newsletter! Members were urged to remember that any potential member of the IAM was likely to be "*a keen motorist - so if you see one, remind him of the formation of the group and encourage him to join (or her of course!)*".

In order to help attain this goal an events programme was already seen as an important part of the group's strategy with the newsletter including a report on the first ever group outing to vehicle repairers Bampton Brothers on 20th August 1970. There was a trip to see the prototype Concorde 002 at Fairford on 4th October, and other trips included Swindon Police Station and Pressed Steel-Fisher.

Interestingly the group planned its first Treasure Hunt for Sunday 8th November. The year concluded with a film show on the 8th December - presumably with a "real" projector and screen - no video or DVD in those days!

Members were assured that if all the events were as successful as the Bampton Brothers trip then they could be certain of having a "*jolly good time*".

OPTIONS PLUS

As I missed doing this write up for the last newsletter I hope this will act as a reminder, of the visit from Jenny Bayliss from Options Plus.

Jenny agreed to come along last December (I know that this was some 6 months ago!). She is a fully trained Occupational Therapist and works part time 3 days a week for Options Plus, located at The Independent Living Centre, Stratton Road, Swindon -Telephone Number 01793 643966.

Weeks before the visit Jenny was doing lots of research and requesting literature for our Meeting. On the day she boxed up all the leaflets and several items of specialist equipment to bring along that she thought may be useful.

Jenny started the evening by talking about chairs and seating positioning with the use of seat pads as demonstration and emphasized how important not just for the driver but also for the comfort of passengers it was to be seated with the correct posture to prevent driver fatigue. She then went on to talk about how vehicles can be specially adapted to suit driver needs.

People with special need can go along to the Mobility Advice and Vehicle Information Service (MAVIS) in Berkshire, where they offer free information and a range of practical assessments, for which there is a charge. Their e-mail address is mavis@dft.gsi.gov.uk The Accredited Mobility Centres based at Oxford and Bristol can also do assessments and the cost is approximately £60.00 and there is possibly a waiting list.

As a vehicle driver one of the condition of holding a licence is that you must by law advise of any change in medical conditions to the Vehicle Licensing Centre, they may refer you on to a specialist organisation. They can also advise on which garages would do any alterations. Two garages I know of which both have e-mail addresses are www.brotherwood.com or www.gowringsmobility.com. Both sell a wide range of conversions that allow a wheelchair to be driven into the back of a vehicle and placed next to a rear passenger, so that the occupant feels comfortable rather than on display. Brotherwood also do a Fiat Multipla conversion that enables a wheelchair to pass

through the car and be positioned next to driver. I am sure there are 1001 different variations, vehicles can be adapted, it is normally the case of asking the right person. Mobility grants are also available to some people again either try www.disabilityworld.com or www.justmobility.co.uk and for advised on converted-vehicle VAT refunds try logging onto www.hmce.gov.uk.

Another alternate for disable people to get about on their own, is the purchase of a Mobility Scooter or Electric Chair which will give you back a degree of independence. By making an appointment with Options Plus, Jenny can run through various important issues to enable you to make an informed decision before purchasing a unit. The cost of these units can be as much as £4000 you could pay that out and then find they are not be suitable. Depending on where you take the scooters you may require by law to have lights, mirrors, indicators and most importantly Insurance.

They have various models to try out at the Centre along with other walking and bathing aids and household items that may help someone with a disability along with an assortment of lifting / hoisting aids.

Jenny has an excellent database on her computer and can access most companies for further information. She is also a member of the "REMAP" team, which is a group of Therapists and Engineers who work together to design and make "one off" items that cannot be purchased through normal outlets.

Most of her referrals are from Social Services, but a lot of casual callers drop in for information and then make appointments and visitors come along having talked to someone else or people have heard of the organisation, from visits she has made to groups, such as her visit to ours.

Options Plus is an Independent Advice Centre and all equipment is loaned to them from dealers. They are funded from the Health Authority and from Social Services and they are also a registered charity.

Debbie Herbert

Wiltshire and Swindon Safety Camera Partnership (WSSCP)

For our Group Night on Wednesday 4th May we were fortunate to be able to arrange a second visit by WSSCP.

Topical the evening was set to be as the Partnership had commenced speed enforcement on the Wiltshire section of the M4 only a few weeks earlier (13th April)! The launch was high profile, it has to be said slightly more so than the speed camera demonstration organised by "M4 Protest" on 30th April. A bizarre aspect of the demonstration, which saw 400 vehicles travelling at c. 56 mph between the Membury and Leigh Delamere service stations (c. 200 in each direction) was that they were given a Police escort!!

Anyway, back to the evening, the Partnership set up their equipment in the BHH car park and using a target vehicle driven by one of the Officers in attendance we were given the opportunity to "speed check" the vehicle, fortunately no tickets were issued! Given the unusual activity in the car park we had a couple of very welcome but unexpected visitors to see what was going on, our ever helpful porters from BHH The exacting set up procedures were explained as was how any erroneous signals detected whilst speed measurement was taking place would disallow the reading. I was amazed by the depth of focus of the camera, and the speed of target acquisition.

WSSCP have 8 mobile units operating in the region, 2 of these motorcycle based. The camera evidence is used to back up the opinion of the Officer; it cannot be used randomly. Whilst the Lastec equipment has a specified operational distance of 9 - 999.9 metres (and a maximum speed of 299 mph!), practical operational ranges varied from 50 - 200m in 30 mph limits to c. 400m in National Speed Limit areas. In a well deserved "pop" at some of the media hype, Sgt Nick Blencowe, stated that the Partnership adhered to current ACPO guidelines (10% + 2mph) when considering prosecution. The media is informed of the facts, a cynical view might be that facts don't always sell newspapers!

The Partnership is far from covert in its activities; a visit to their Website gives details of the various enforcement sites and statistics for the number of collisions and vehicles exceeding the speed limit. Should you have been caught the site also allows you to view photographic evidence of the offence.

Under “hypothecation” the running costs of the Partnerships can be recovered from income generated by fines. One sad fact is that the Government has so far disallowed the use of funds to cover general driver education programmes (again, bizarre given the mantra “we don’t want to catch you, we do want to slow you down” - why not educate people why “speed kills”?).

Moving on, the Partnership has also responsibility for traffic monitoring, you have seen them, the twin wires across the carriageway, about 30 cm apart. These are left in place for c. 8 days and produce stats for vehicle speed in both directions, by day and time, and are able to differentiate between cars and commercial vehicles.

A thoroughly enjoyable and informative evening, we will try to arrange a return visit next year.

Mark Simpson

Punctureseal

A representative from Punctureseal was invited to come along to our Group Night in April. Unfortunately the person nominated to give the demonstration and talk was called away and after a hurried telephone call by the company, Tony Robinson came along, arriving a little late. It could easily have become another quiz night!

Tony set up a wheel with a new tyre on, onto an axle to enable it to rotate and after talking about the benefits of having this sealant put into your tyres, he proceeded to stab at the tyre rotating it quickly after the liquid inside did its job and sealed all the holes.

The sealant has been developed over many years of rigorous testing and the installation is quick and easy. If you own a motorcycle you can buy the cans and do it yourself otherwise you can call into one of their branches or have a qualified installer call on-site either at your home or work.

If you have ever waited on the motorway waiting for someone to come out to change that flat tyre then you may want to think very hard about having this treatment applied to your tyres. It saves you from getting dirty in jacking up your vehicle and also saves time and inconvenience again of being stuck on the side of the road or having to change your tyre in the rain at night.

Having checked your tyres if you have had any punctures you will be able to tell by the pink markings / plugs that come through from the inside of the tyres, If you see this then it is recommend you have the damaged tyre checked out with one of the major tyre companies.

Punctureseal remains liquid for the entire life of the tyre and by coating the inner surfaces it conditions the casing and stops porosity leak, rim leaks, punctures and controls most blowouts. It is suitable for cars, caravan and motorbike tyres.

The company's head office is in Bristol - they have an e-mail address - info@punctureseal.com and further information can be obtained from www.punctureseal.com.

Some of our members have since had this treatment put into their tyres, so if we need any further endorsements, I know one very important senior person that has had this done. Not sure if the biker who received the free canister on the night has given it a try - maybe he will let us know how it went.

Debbie Herbert

THATCHAM VISIT

On March 30th a party of 10 arrived at M.I.R.R.C. where we were met in the foyer by Ian Lewis, the Engineering Service Manager., who was to be our guide for the tour. After tea and biscuits we had an on screen presentation of what we were about to see. The tour itself took us to all departments, explained in detail by Ian and any questions asked expertly answered. Much interest was shown by the members, I feel sure it will be something to consider for a future visit. - **Peter Thomson.**

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

15th June - Treasure Hunt

The start will be at staggered intervals from 7pm from the lane by the Caravan Sales Centre at Blunsdon. If you are unsure of how to find the start point please ask at the Group night or contact me by telephone - my number is shown on Page 2 of this Newsletter. We then aim to take in a variety of different roads and conditions for driving. The drive will last about 1 hour (unless you get totally lost in which case you can open the guidance envelope). Our final destination will be a local pub with a good menu choice. All families are welcome, so far we have 10 people taking part, please come forward and support this event. This event is free of charge.

10th July - Barbecue

An all inclusive Barbecue for £5.00 per person!

The pitch is booked for Sunday 10th July at Lydiard Park, Swindon. We have full use of the grilles from 1pm through to 9pm. and all you need to bring along with you is a blanket or chairs to sit on and maybe a ball or games to make the afternoon a team event.

I have ordered the sunshine but this is not 100% guaranteed !! but someone normally sets up a Gazebo.

Please either add your names to the list at Group night or phone me - telephone number on Page 2.

24th August - Air Ambulance

Wednesday 24th August - Trip to Wiltshire Air Ambulance Unit, at their Devizes Headquarters. Start time 19:30 hrs prompt.

Once again a list will be available at Group Nights or alternatively please contact me direct, as I will need to advise our hosts of the number attending no later than the 19th August.

Time allowing on the journey home we could meet up either in the pub at Avebury or one of the locals in Wroughton.

Debbie Herbert
Group Secretary

Group Night Programme

Wednesday 1st June - Blunsdon House Hotel

Modern Anti-Theft security - David Douch

David worked for Renault in the UK and France for a considerable number of years becoming recognised as an expert in the field of vehicle security prior to retiring.

With a graphically illustrated presentation David highlights different types of, and motivation, for theft, initiatives undertaken by the industry, and future trends. The influence of security measures on Insurance Group is reviewed, followed by a handful of practical steps we all can take to safeguard our vehicles and their content.

Wednesday 6th July - Blunsdon House Hotel

Dianne Murdoch is Donor Transplant Coordinator for the UK Transplant centre based at Churchill Hospital, Oxford.

UK Transplant is a part of the NHS and manages the National Transplant Database of all donors and patients awaiting a transplant. It is responsible for raising awareness of the importance of organ donation, funding initiatives within the NHS, and acting as central point for information on transplant matters. UK Transplant covers all organs including, Liver, Kidney, Heart, Lung, Cornea, and as of 1st October 2005, will merge with the National Blood Service. 2005 is the 10th anniversary of the National Organ Donor Register and saw the launch of a nationwide challenge to encourage a million more people to register, c. 546,000 have so far done so and currently in the UK c. 20% of the population are on the Register.

Since 1st April 2005 (70 days), 462 people have received transplants; 163 people have donated organs; 471 people have received the gift of sight; 6,035 people are still waiting for transplants. Have you expressed your wishes to your nearest and dearest?

3rd August - Westlea Fire Station, The Chesters, Stonehill Green, Westlea, Swindon

Road Traffic Collisions - A Learning Experience

Sub Officer Perry Payne, Westlea Fire Station

Perry and his colleagues are no strangers to the Swindon Group having hosted 2 previous, well attended events at Westlea.

A graphic hard hitting presentation with the emphasis on the cause and consequences of Road Traffic Collisions, viewed from the “no-nonsense and matter of fact” perspective of the Fire Service, sending a powerful message of individual driver responsibility, choice and accountability. The message is strengthened with added realism gained from the individual and personal experience of being directly situated within a fully operational Fire Service environment and experience.

Attendees will gain information that will assist them to take personal ownership of making safer choices when driving. Road Traffic Collisions are not ‘accidents’ (which implies that they couldn’t have been avoided) they are collisions, they have a cause and most often they could and should have been avoided. Unfortunately, the most common cause is a poor choice of action by the driver.

This is a powerful reinforcement of WHY advanced drivers do what they do and WHY it's necessary to take driving so seriously. It shows what happens when it all goes wrong - how it happens and why.

THANK YOU

I’m sure we would all like to thank the Blunsdon House Hotel for the use of their conference facilities each month for our Group Night.

Comfort and safety are key issues when we go out for the evening and the hotel is in a convenient central location for many of our members.

Once again, much appreciation goes out to the Staff and Hotel.

PARTING THOUGHT

The Two Second Rule

For many years driving educators have been advocating the two second rule and today even with advances in vehicle technology and road engineering this rule still holds as one of the most important life saving rules to all motorists.

The rule is one simplicity itself and everybody can measure the safety gap between themselves and another vehicle in front by simply counting, one-one thousand, two - one thousand. Its operation !

Watch a Vehicle in front of you pass a certain static point, lets say a bridge, a lamp post or similar as it passes say " One - One Thousand , Two - One Thousand ". If you have passed the chosen static point by the time it took you to say that. You are too close to stop. Drop Back and Maintain Your Correct Safety Gap.