

SWINDON & DISTRICT GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS
www.swindondrivers.com
07050 682842
Newsletter
Spring 2006

Inside

Page 2	Who's Who in Your Group?
Page 3 - 5	Chairman's Ramblings
Page 6	Test Passes/New Members
Page 7 -8	Regional Forum Matters
Page 9	From Your Chief Observer
Page 10 -14	New Vehicle Development
Page 15	Correspondence Received
Page 16-17	Quick Tips
Page 18	Safe Driving in the Spring Showers
Page 19	Has Anyone Seen Reginald Molehusband?
Page 20	Forthcoming Meetings & Events

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.

Data Protection Act 1998

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?

President : **Alan Stillman** (swindongroup@hotmail.com)

Chair : **Graham Mearns** (mearnsge@globalnet.co.uk)
Tel : 01793 791323

Group Secretary : **Debbie Herbert** (florins2@aol.com)

Membership Secretary : **Tony Gilbert** (anthony_gilbert@tiscali.co.uk)

Treasurer : **Margaret Brewer** (m_m_brewer@hotmail.com)

Chief Observer : **Les Brown** (iam_observing@yahoo.co.uk)

Committee Member : **David Douch** (daviddouch@yahoo.co.uk)

Newsletter & Website : **Simon Byford** (simon@byford.plus.com)

Group Website : <http://www.swindondrivers.com/>

Group email : swindongroup@hotmail.com

Group Telephone Number : **07050 682842**

Postal Address : **12 Abney Moor**
Liden
Swindon
SN3 6NN

IAM HQ Tel No : **020 8996 9600**

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

CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS

Well here we are and suddenly we're well into the new year. I hope whatever your resolutions may have been that they are still intact. It seems a while since I have rambled, so once more into the breach...

My family and I went off to France for Christmas. My wife is a GP so we only get both Christmas and New Year free once every seven years and this was our chance to get away as a family unit rather than having a traditional Christmas with the extended tribe. We usually drive down to France when we go skiing, but this year we decided to fly to Lyon and rent a car for the remainder of the trip to Val D'Isere. It seems that renting a car is not as simple as I thought. I'd booked the flights and car rental on Expedia. I checked that I had taken out the "collision damage waiver" and that all would be correctly insured. When I came to collect the car the lady at Europcar said there was a 900 Euro excess! Now I'm a simple chap, while it's some time since I last rented a car, I thought that collision damage waiver meant just that. I could accept a small excess - say 50 Euro, or maybe 100 Euros at most. Anyway they of course offered to let me buy more insurance, at a cost of 12 Euro's per day. Some quick sums, and for 12 days that was an additional 144 Euro (£100 in round figures). I decided to rely on my own skills and do without. Then they offered me insurance for the lights, tyres and windscreen - another 8 Euros per day! Well I was getting a bit shirty by this stage, and had to revert to English. Anyway I declined, on the basis that a flat tyre would soon be mended at the local tyre shop. As it turned out being careful, as you would expect, we managed to get to and from our apartment without incident, and got away with it. So my advice to you if you are renting a car is to check out the insurance in a bit more detail before you get committed.

Talking about insurance I had the chance to test my car policy a couple of weeks ago. I had left my car in the car park at work in the centre of Swindon. When I got back I opened the back door to put my brief case in - I noticed some "stuff" on the back seat. My first thought was "What have the children left in here?" Then I remembered it had been fine in the morning.

Closer inspection revealed that it was broken glass, and I found that the rear window had been broken.

I got my little card out and called the insurance people, they put me through to Autoglass, and they made arrangements to come and fix it in a day or so. It all worked quite well from an insurance point of view - even if Autoglass insisted on bringing the wrong window a couple of times which slowed the repair down a bit. When I opened the boot to clear out all the glass I found that someone had decided to give me a small brick! Very generous - and very irritating. The car is only a few months old, and now has a rattle in the boot because we could not get all the glass out. I could get very cross if I find out "who dunnit". Perhaps it's fortunate that I'll never know. I don't park next to the footpath any more.

On a more positive note I made a silly commitment at the end of last year - I've volunteered to cycle from Swindon to Zurich to raise money for charity. I'm supporting two charities through my work, one is Weston Spirit (www.westonspirit.org.uk) (founded by Simon Weston of Falklands fame) which supports youngsters on the verge of social exclusion, the other is the Association of Children's Hospices (<http://www.childhospice.org.uk>), which supports families who have children with life limiting illnesses. So let me warn you now - coming to Group nights will be fraught with danger - I may have a sponsorship form in my hand!

The cycle trip will be 650 miles, taken at approximately 80 miles per day over 8 days. I have to say that I have come from my start point of 20 miles to 50 miles in a day since the beginning of January. In fact last weekend I cycled to see my brother in Thornbury, about 45 miles each way from my house, stayed the night, and came back the next day. Still quite a lot to do between now and June. Assuming it all goes well I'll come and tell you all about it later in the year!

On to Group matters. This is the IAM 50th anniversary year, you may have noticed the celebratory Newsletter cover. We are hoping to mark the anniversary by organising a trip to Goodwood for a skid pan session - perhaps with some observed runs to/from Goodwood to make it more of a challenge.

Some of you will know that one of our Observers, David Douch, has been coaching a young chap out from BBC Radio Swindon. The young man has been doing very well by all accounts. If he is reading this I'd obviously say that David's more detailed feedback is the one to pay attention to! The drives have been recorded and broadcast, and has generated some interest to the radio station, and will hopefully lead to some new members. It's been a great initiative, and we'd like to do more of the same. The Committee had made the decision to help this Associate with the Skills for Life Fees. We'd like to do more of the same providing we can generate more interest for the Group. We'd like to extend the thought to all of our Members and Associates. If you can think of a worthy candidate that might bring more members to the Group, particularly in our target younger age groups the Committee would be delighted to consider supporting that candidate with their skills for life fees. Obviously not a free for all, and probably not more than one place a year. Have a think - if you have someone in mind drop one of the committee a line - or come along to a Group night for a chat.

Of course if we can bring in lots of new members we'll need lots of new Observers too! Les Brown and I are going to have a bit of a planning session in early March, and we'll be asking the Observers help to think about how we might develop a more accessible programme for people who want to become Observers.

My current Associate is sitting her test any day now. I would wish her luck - but I really want her to "do what she does" and accept the outcome of the assessment. As we are running up to the test we of course start to think about lots of revision points. In fact Andy Poulton ran through a lot of these at the last IAM Regional Forum. So rather than keep these to myself I've reproduced them for you all elsewhere in the Newsletter.

As ever - safe motoring - and I'll see you all at the next Group night - don't forget I'll be looking for sponsorship....

Graham Mearns

TEST PASSES

Our congratulations to the following members who have recently passed their Advanced Driving Test, and their Observers :

Daniel Woodfield (observer Simon West)

Anthony Cook (observer Mike Newman)

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome **Danny Parker, Darren Rolfe, Tong Sunn, Janet Warren, Kevin Smith, Wendy Jennings, Margaret Croxford Robert Kerr & Graham Parsons** to our Group.

QUICK-LEE CLEANERS

QUALITY DRY CLEANING
15 Borough Fields, Wootton Bassett

ALL GARMENTS HAND FINISHED
AND RETEXTURED

Specialists in Curtains, Covers and Duvet Cleaning

Repairs & Alterations Undertaken

We also hire Carpet Cleaners

GIVE US A CALL 01793 848859

REGIONAL FORUM MATTERS

At the Regional Forum towards the end of last year Lona Williams reported that the Region is doing very well. I think we are all agreed that at the Swindon Group we pride ourselves in bringing our Associates up to a very high standard. While we want to move Associates through the programme as effectively as possible we do not set specific time based milestones to get people through. We prefer to help our Associates achieve the right standards, and realise their potential (this is beginning to sound a bit like work - except for the time thing!).

So we value the feedback from the examiners - and take the issues on board. At the Regional Forum Andy Poulton gave us a very amusing talk on some of his experiences from an examiners perspective. Here are a few of the highlights - I'm not going to do the whole course here - just a few things that stand out in my mind that mark the difference between a "pass" and a "good pass".

The first thing the examiner expects to see...

Vehicle cleanliness

- A well prepared car - it does not have to be new and shiny - simply well prepared to the best of its' potential. Andy has found his feet fighting for space with discarded water bottles and other rubbish. Needless to say the Associate is immediately at a disadvantage - they have more to prove to overcome the first impressions

Correct documents

- Proper documents - Without a licence insurance and MoT check the test won't be happening at all. Andy recounted a number of tales where the candidate has requested that the test route be modified to include picking these documents up. Or various relatives rushing about the countryside and arriving in a cloud of tyre and brake smoke to deliver the documents.

Cockpit Drill

- A verbal drill is not essential - but gets things off to a good start. However you must check the security of the vehicle when you get into it, and you must make sure it is safe to start, and that the examiner is properly belted in and the head restraint properly adjusted. Andy tells a lovely tale of an individual in an old Land Rover who refused to do a cockpit drill. A minute after setting off, just before joining a motorway he had to stop to shut the drivers' door which had not been closed properly. Andy was then faced with a dilemma - should he sit there for the next 90 minutes before telling the candidate that they would not be recommended - or should he carry out the full assessment?

Dawdling, Hesitancy and Comfort Braking

- Making confident, assertive, consistent progress is the very heart of being an Advanced Driver. If you fiddle about, have uncertain braking habits then you're not demonstrating to the examiner that you have really grasped the System of Car Control. By definition it is a way of approaching and negotiating hazards that is methodical, safe and leaves nothing to chance. It has five phases - Information, Position, Speed, Gears and Acceleration. The only overlapping phase is Information. The rest you separate out and do once per hazard.

Commentary

- This is not mandatory - but it helps from a number of angles. If you can do a commentary you can tell the examiner what you are thinking. It helps the examiner understand what you are doing and why. If you make a mistake then you can confess your errors in your commentary. You can bet the examiner noticed the mistake - you may be able to explain what went wrong. After all if you know you made a mistake the chances are you can fix it. The last feature is that it prevents the examiner from distracting you by getting drawn into conversation.

At the end of the day there is a lot to remember - but all the candidates we present for test are capable of doing it all.

FROM YOUR CHIEF OBSERVER

Welcome to the Chief Observer's Spot.

I have recently changed my car (Skoda Fabia 1.9 Turbo diesel). As well as reading the handbook, I've also discovered a whole host of extras, including free blind spots! One of these I discovered by accident, (nearly). I missed a BMW on a roundabout. It was hidden in the blind spot that is caused by the reinforcing of my safety cell, making the "A" pillar much thicker.

I now have to look and look again to ensure I don't have an accident. Since my near miss, I have seen in the press that not all people have been as fortunate as I have!

Do you know that the Highway Code is being reviewed, and the consultation document is online at: -

<http://www.dsa.gov.uk/content.asp?id=13014> - why not have your say?

Do you all remember what **P O W E R** means?

Petrol, Oil, Water, Electrics, Rubber (tyres and wipers) Remember to check before every journey. It never ceases to amaze me the number of people who I assess, do not check anything, before driving off.

Les Brown

PAUL RIPLEY ARCHIVE

Paul Ripley was the Daily Telegraph's road safety columnist for more than seven years. As Britain's foremost driving expert, he dispensed valuable advice on everything from road rage to tailgating, from passing your test to handbrake ratchet replacements. A selection of his columns is now available online at :

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/motoring/main.jhtml?xml=/motoring/2004/10/08/ripley.xml>.

NEW VEHICLE DEVELOPMENT

December 2005 Meeting : Our scheduled speaker from Fish Brothers cancelled very late in the day but fortunately one of our members **David Douch** was available at short notice and gave a talk based on his 32 years of his working life with Renault where he acquired first hand knowledge of the development process bringing a new vehicle to the market.

Early Stages of Development

This stage involves the process of selecting the type of vehicle to be developed. Not too difficult if you already have an existing vehicle which needs replacing or updating but very demanding if you are to bring a completely new concept to the market. Many countries are involved re the supply of information.

Markets are constantly changing so a considerable amount of time is spent on market analysis. You may for example have developed a previous vehicle solely for the European market but to maintain profitability you require a vehicle that can be adapted for all potential markets both left & right hand drive.

Build Locations

The location for building the vehicle must be taken into consideration at an early stage, especially if the vehicle is to be marketed in emerging markets such as Russia, old eastern block countries and Africa. The cost of manufacturing in these countries is very low in comparison the UK or France. The smaller the vehicle the more difficult it is to make a profit.

Design

Another item that is set in the early development stage of the vehicle. It may evolve slightly for technical reasons but the overall design and dimensions must be agreed as soon as possible. From this point on everything that is required to fit into the vehicle must be designed to fit within the design specification dimensions.

Cost & Price

Again a decision must be made at an early stage so that budgets can be set for each of the development teams. This leads directly into the next phase of putting together the vehicle specification.

The vehicle is divided into sections for example: ergonomics, suspension, doors, trim, heating/air-conditioning, and in my case vehicle anti-theft security. There may be up to 15 managers, each being responsible for a section. Manufacturers may vary as to how they approach this area but all have to decide the specification of the vehicle. This is when the fun really starts and all sections go over budget and need to cut back until the final specification for each section is agreed. Generally this is completed at least 4 years ahead of the vehicle launch. (The target is to reduce the vehicle development time to between 24 -36 months maximum).

MD's Sign-Off

If it is decided the markets are there and this vehicle can be marketed at the expected price and make a profit the MD makes the final decision to build the vehicle.

Development

From the moment the decision is made to build all managers are required to keep abreast of any changes to technical legislation from the EU, UN, insurance industry & country homologation requirements. These regulations are constantly being updated and any vehicle built is required to comply with them. The vehicle is divided into approximately 86 technical sections. We now have European homologation dealt with by the manufacturer and "Vehicle Certification Agency" of the country in which the vehicle is to be built.

Be warned!! Import and purchase a Grey import at your own risk. It cannot be registered unless it complies with EU legislation or is taken through a single vehicle approval which it may or may not pass.

Example of Door Development

Design, material, glass, door glass support mechanism, seals inner and outer, locks, hinges, wiring, door handle in and out, inner and outer trim, water draining process, anti-burst requirements, side impact implications, position of holes in door inner and outer skin, assembly problems, radio speaker position, switches, linkages to door handles. COST!!! & Weight!!!

Cost Problems

It is no exaggeration to say that all manufacturers count each penny. Imagine a vehicle being over budget by £100 and you are in the life of the vehicle expecting to build in excess of 5,000,000. I need say no more re your profit margin. The manufacturer needs to be able to predict inflation and other economic factors over a 4 to 5 year development cycle. If they get it wrong they will be out of business very quickly.

Testing

Contrary to many peoples expectations manufacturers do not try and make their cars fail in service. It is not in their interest to have bad publicity. From my own experience I can confirm many components are tested to destruction to limits that are well beyond the normal life expectancy.

Manufacturers rely on many suppliers and if just one makes a small mistake it can have far reaching consequences either in the short term or longer term in the life of a vehicle.

Pre-Production Line Assembly Programme Simulations and Development

To get a vehicle into production a small pre-production line is developed on which each component or set of components is mounted. The time for each operation is recorded along with the sequence and method. From this data the production line mounting sequence, speed and all other component supply requirements can be developed.

Today for example all the seats for a vehicle arrive just in time 4/5 hrs before they are fitted to a vehicle. There is no stock held at the factory. On the same production line all the variants in engine size, number of doors, colour and left or right hand drive will be built. Imagine working all this out!!

Tooling up takes place when the development simulation has been completed. Although designs of robots will already have been completed all the programming of the computers will need to be developed and fine-tuned.

Country Training

Having developed the vehicle and the final technical specification has been completed you then have to develop training courses in the following areas - Sales, After Sales and Parts.

Each country sends instructors (in my case to France) for the initial training. From this the instructors for each country, with the aid of base documents, develop the courses as necessary for their country.

Network Training

Following the instructor training you now need to train the dealer network. In the case of vehicle technicians probably one or two from each dealer, depending on the complexity of the vehicle will be required to attend the course, either at a central point in the UK or regional training may be provided to reduce costs to the dealer and reduce travel time. In turn the trained staff who are usually the top technicians will in turn run dealer training courses in house at the dealer premises.

Translating of workshop manual now needs to take place. Specialist technical translators translate from the base language (in my case French) into the language of the country in which the vehicle is to be sold. This is best carried out by people who have a good technical grounding and either live or have lived in the country. Once proof reading has been completed production and distribution can take place, all before the vehicle launch date.

Factory Training

While the network training is taking place the factory personnel are also going through the same process. The production line is started at slow speed and all line processes are checked and refined for optimum performance.

Having decided in which countries the vehicle is to be sold the vehicle launch date needs to be confirmed. Not all countries take all the variants available so the initial production mix must match the initial requirements. Vehicle Distribution can then take place ready for the dealer launch.

I hope the above gives you an insight as to what is going on behind the scenes to get a vehicle on the road from the initial concept.

PETROL PRICES

At the time of writing petrol prices were once again on an upward trend. This is due to sentiment on the world oil market arising from political, economic and seasonal factors pushing up the price of crude oil rather than any actual material shortage.

Readers are reminded that it is possible to obtain details of the cheapest prices locally on the web via :

<http://www.petrolprices.com/>

Experts are suggesting that consumers may cut back on other areas of personal expenditure once prices pass the psychological £1/litre barrier.

It is hoped, however, that these pressures will hasten development of alternatives to petrol and diesel such as bio-ethanol.

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

Dear Simon,

I was having a look on the web this morning and saw my name linked with your newsletter! Imagine my surprise when I opened the page to find Swindon IAM's history and me being quoted from the first newsletter.

I remember my days as Newsletter Editor with great fondness. I can't imagine there are many people left in the club as I knew it but if there are, please give them my regards. At the time I was a youngster compared with most. I moved to Essex and have now settled in Kent. I am a solicitor although I have semi retired and spend my time as a Tribunal President and a Judge. I have 2 great kids and 2 grandchildren.

Needless to say I am still an IAM member. I never became involved in any local groups again. I think that if you throw your heart and soul into one group it's difficult to galvanise yourself into becoming part of another group.

Anyway, it was very interesting to see your website.

Regards

Bruce Edgington (via email)

Editor's Note

Bruce is a founding member of the group and the first editor of the newsletter in 1970.

QUICK TIPS

Vehicle Insurance

While in contact with "Direct Line Insurance" for my car, I was advised that children added to a parents insurance to allow them to drive would accrue no claims bonus in the same way as the adult. This of course providing they were not involved in an accident.

Vehicle Theft

Modern vehicles are now fitted with sophisticated engine immobilisers and alarms. The one obvious weak link is the key and remote control. Thieves are now targeting the key during household robbery in particular.

Treat your car keys/remote control as money. Do not leave them lying around by the front door ever. Letter boxes can be opened!!!

If you are out and about in the office for example do not leave them lying on the desk or in a jacket pocket. Keep them on you at all times.

Reminder. If you leave your vehicle with the engine running and it is stolen ("I just went to grab a newspaper") the insurance company will not pay out for the loss of the vehicle.

If you do have to put items into the boot of your car do not remain in the same location.

Example: you arrive at a service station on the motorway open the boot to hide an item. You have now given a potential thief the information he requires. Think ahead and put items in the boot before you depart from another location.

At a service station lock your car at all times after filling up before you walk to the kiosk to pay.

Your Safety

Do not travel with items such as umbrellas lying on the top of the rear parcel shelf of brief cases on the back seat. In the event of an accident while the car safety devices may save you the missile in the back of the car could kill you.

Incorrect Use of Seat Belts

I have recently noticed several people wearing seat belts with their hand wedged between the seat belt and their chest to relieve the tension of the belt. If you do this the belt will be too slack in the event of an accident. Also if the seat belt pre-tensioner is fired it could break your arm or hand.

Head Restraints

Check the height each time you get in a car for yourself and all passengers. The top of the head restraint should be in line with the top of your head.

David Douch

Stopatred is a campaign to improve the status of cycling in the eyes of the public and policy-makers alike, and to tackle the attitudes of those cyclists whose behaviour perpetuates the image of cyclists as a low-status social 'out-group' on wheels.

Its specific focus is on the disregard of traffic signals.

It also has two general aims:

- To encourage cyclists to show courtesy towards other road users and pedestrians.
- To encourage greater compliance with the laws of the road.

If you are a cyclist as well as an advanced motorist you can visit Stopatred at <http://stopatred.org/>. **Stopatred** was created by concerned cyclists, “alarmed about how the cause of cycling is being undermined by the reckless actions of an unrepresentative minority”.

SAFE DRIVING IN THE SPRING SHOWERS

Winter has seen below average rainfall, but BT wants its people to be aware of the predicted heavy rain showers this spring - and to take extra care when travelling.

A third of all fatal road crashes in the UK happen on wet or flooded roads, and 15% of all collisions - over 30,000 per annum - occur during rainy periods.

A significant proportion of BT's own vehicle collisions also occur on wet roads.

Meteorologists are predicting particularly wet weather in the coming weeks - and road users are being urged by road safety experts to be extra cautious.

Changeable weather, such as a heavy downpour, creates hazardous road conditions and reduces driver visibility. The danger is greatest on busy roads and motorways where large trucks can make the road conditions worse and significantly impair a driver's view.

This year, the changeable weather patterns of April are set to continue well into May. April is a traditionally rainy month, characterised by sudden downpours of varying intensity followed by bursts of sunshine.

BT's Group Health and Safety Advisor Dave Wallington said: 'The combination of sunshine and showers at this time of year spells real danger for our drivers so it is vital they are well prepared and aware of the risks. Sunshine can reflect off water on the road and creates a distracting, visibility reducing, glare. Before any trip it is important to be aware of the weather conditions and undertake appropriate vehicle checks.'

BT has therefore issued the following tips for driving this spring:

- Be aware of stopping distances, which are twice as long in the wet - and follow the 4-second rule behind other vehicles to allow ample braking distance, prevent skids and avoid aquaplaning.
- Maximise your field of vision by keeping the windscreen free of dirt, smears, 'furry dice' and other distractions.
- Check, and replace, worn and defective wiper blades; and check windscreens for chips that can cause distraction and reduce visibility.

HAS ANYONE SEEN REGINALD MOLEHUSBAND?

Most readers will remember Reginald Molehusband - a driver in an Austin 1100 who could not park his car properly. His name became a metaphor for anyone whose driving skills were not up-to-scratch.

“This is the story of Reginald Molehusband, married, two children, whose reverse parking was a public danger (*brakes and gears crunching*). People came from miles just to see it. Bets were laid on his performance. What he managed to miss at the back, he was sure to make up for at the front. Bus drivers and taxis changed their routes to avoid him. Until the day that Reginald Molehusband did it right (*sound of reversing*). Not too close, far enough forward... come on Reginald... and reverse in slowly... come on.... And watching traffic... (*applause from watching crowd*) and park perfectly!

Well done Reginald Molehusband, the safest parker in town.”

Sadly the PIF [public information film] featuring Reginald’s exploits is missing from the National Archives. A search through the BBC’s archives has also been unsuccessful.

A spokesman for the National Archives said: “Anyone who finds a copy of Molehusband would be held aloft and carried through the streets by PIF enthusiasts”.

It is quite possible that someone in our Group has or knows someone has a VHS copy of the film. If you do find a copy please contact the National Archives on **020 8876 3444** or the Central Office of Information on **020 7928 5037**.

Readers will be relieved to know that most PIFs have been kept safely. Classics such as Joe and Petunia and Claude the Overloaded Caravan are available on two DVDs called “Charley Says” which are priced at around £15 each.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

7TH JUNE

GROUP NIGHT

WHAT A FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY

We have been invited to hold our June Group night at the Mercedes Benz Dealership along Drakes Way – Swindon

If you would like the chance to walk around some amazing vehicles, take a look at the Service Area and ask as many questions on how today's modern vehicles are placed on diagnostic testing equipment then Wednesday 7th June will be the day

Meeting at 7:30pm

Come along for an impressive evening

Not just Mercedes but also the Smart Car and Jeeps to be seen

This is in place of our usual gathering at the Blunsdon House Hotel

Website : <http://www.mercedes-benzofswindon.co.uk/>

Wednesday 5th July 2006

Blunsdon House Hotel 19:30. The Speaker or Activity will appear on our website <http://www.swindondrivers.com/>.