

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

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**Disclaimer**

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

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

## **WHO'S WHO IN YOUR GROUP?**

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)

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

Group email : [swindongroup@hotmail.com](mailto:swindongroup@hotmail.com)

Group Telephone Number : **07050 682842**

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

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

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

## CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS

I have been very focussed on my little bike ride from Swindon to Zurich. I can now tell you that it is 720 miles from door to door, and it takes eight days to cycle there. The team had a great time, and if you want to hear more about "The Tour de Zurich" make a note to come to the AGM (just as a reminder - 7:30 Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September - Blunsdon House Hotel). Not only will you have the pleasure of mixing with your fellow Advanced Motorists, hearing about how the Swindon Group has been doing this year, but I'll have some slides and video to tell you all about our trip. It would be great to see you all there - I can promise an interesting evening.

I'm sorry to hear that the Mercedes Benz dealership visit was cancelled at the last minute. I was busy on my bicycle, getting from Metz to Strasbourg a mere 107 miles in one day, so I didn't hear about it until I got back. The management were called away on business at short notice, and have asked us to pass on their apologies. We will re-arrange this, perhaps for October or November.

Great news - **Tony Gilbert** has joined the committee as membership secretary. I'm sure you will join me in welcoming Tony to the Committee, and I know it will be an enormous help to the current committee members. When Tony has got on first name terms with the Group Computer we will be doing a membership review. One of the features we sometimes have trouble with is that people get confused about their IA membership. That's because there are two parts to it: -

1. When you pass your test you are invited to join the IAM. This is IAM Group in London, and payment is normally done by direct debit (my last one was for £17.50). For this you get the right to display the IAM badge and get a copy of Advanced Driving Magazine
2. You will also be invited to join your local group. For us that is Swindon & District Advanced Motorists. Our membership costs £10 per year, and you can pay by direct debit or by cheque. For this you get a copy of the Newsletter, monthly Group Meetings. Your money also supports the Group to carry out the Observation of new members. While the Observers all give their time for free there are some expenses that need to be covered, Group Observer insurance, travel to regional meetings, newsletter production etc.

We'll be sending out the Swindon & District Group membership renewals in August, along with the AGM agenda. Please support your local group - we need, and appreciate, your help.

I had a really exciting invitation in May. A place opened up at the last minute to attend a track day at Palmer Sport at Bedford Aerodrome. It didn't take me long to book an emergency day's holiday and get myself down there. This was an opportunity to drive a variety of road and track cars, mostly with an instructor next to you. Our group started in a small fleet of Caterham Seven's. These are small two seat sports cars, little more than an engine and four wheels. A damp track called for some delicate work at the wheel and throttle. None the less I manage to spin the car, but posted a decent time. We moved on to the Porsche 911 Club Sport. This felt enormous compared to the Seven, and I got a real sense of the weight of the engine at the back. Things were going very well until I took a bit too much kerb at the chicane and I managed another spin, this time a full 360 degrees, but we stayed on track. The instructor was kind enough to say that it was OK and that I should continue to try hard. From there we stepped into a single seater racing car, with wings and slick tyres. Needless to say quite a daunting prospect, but something I have wanted to do for years. We had about 20 minutes in the car and by the end I was beginning to find how hard you could brake and corner at high speed (no spins or drama - so I'm learning).

We then has a spell in a Jaguar two seater race car with an instructor. By building speed lap on lap I managed to get up to maximum speed in sixth gear for a fast left hand bend - exhilarating. Next was a Nissan 350 road car round a tight track. The instructor and I had a laugh about this. He had to comment on the shuffle of the wheel through the hands - I confessed to doing some Observing for the IAM.

He confessed that on his recent mini bus test he had been criticised for not shuffling the wheel. Anyway I posted one of the fastest times in my group on this event.

I was shattered at the end of the day, but I can say this - the System of Car Control still works on the race track. Information is key - looking ahead is vital for a fast lap. Position the car with precision, of course you can use the full width of the road, but putting it where you want it is what counts. Gears - well you have to overlap especially in the cars with sequential gearboxes, but you do need to finish with the brakes before you steer or accelerate. Acceleration - be gentle - feed the power in - especially in the Caterham Seven. Putting it all together smoothly is even more important especially as the cars get more lighter and more powerful.

Les Brown and I have been trying to arrange an Observers meeting - which we have now set for Saturday 9 September. Our agenda will include the usual items on Observer issues, test feedback and so on. We also want to discuss the Associate Training course, there are a couple of small changes to make sure it fits with what we do in the car. Of course we will also discuss our Observer Training programme, so if you have a notion to Observe you are more than welcome to come along. 9<sup>th</sup> September at the WH Smith building - drop me or one of the committee a line if you need directions.

**Graham Mearns**

## **TEST PASSES**

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

**Anthony Sycamore** (observer Simon West)

**Mike Anderson** (observer Mike Newman)

## **NEW MEMBERS**

We welcome **Matthew Haskins, Graham Pearson, Diana Payne, Christopher Male, Paul Caccavale and Patricia Harper** to our Group.

### **QUICK-LEE CLEANERS**

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## **SLOW DOWN FOR HORSES!**

There are estimated to be three million horse riders in Great Britain, many ride on the road. Horse riders have a right to use the road and both riders and motorists have responsibilities for each other's safety. Unfortunately there are about 3,000 horse related accidents each year.

Drivers should understand the needs and vulnerability of riders and horses and behave courteously towards them at all times. Riders should be courteous to other road users and thank drivers who have slowed down for them.

The following safety tips for motoring around horses are recommended for all road users:

**Watch out for horses being ridden or led on the road, taking extra care at left hand bends and on narrow country lanes, then:**

- Always pass wide and slow, give plenty of room, at least as much as you would when overtaking a car
- Give them plenty of room and be prepared to stop
- Do not frighten horses by sounding your horn or revving your engine
- Look out for riders' signals and be aware that they may not move to the centre of the road prior to turning right
- Riders of horses and ponies are often children so take extra care
- Treat horses as a potential hazard, expect the unexpected and take great care
- Heed a request to slow down or stop

Mutual courtesy and care between drivers and riders is important to prevent intolerance and improve safety.

Further details can be found in the *Highway Code*.

## DIGITAL ENFORCEMENT CAMERAS

At present, it has been impossible to tell whether or not a roadside speed camera is actually loaded with film. But the familiar Gatso camera is now set to be joined by a new generation of digital speed cameras which not only avoid the use of film but do not flash either. Two hundred of the devices are planned to be operational in London alone by the end of 2007.

The speed of vehicles passing through a monitored section of carriageway is measured by sensors buried in the road surface. The control program continuously monitors each of the speed sensor interfaces. As soon as a timing reading is received from the timing processor, it is checked for accuracy, sequence number and validity and converted to a speed using the stored sensor spacing. If the measured speed exceeds the programmed speed threshold, then the vehicle presence loop is monitored until the vehicle clears the loop. The detective loops also trigger the enforcement system to take three images of the offending vehicle.

Three images are captured, the first is a zoom shot showing the vehicle number plate, the second is a wide angle image including make, model, colour of car and the offence data. The system then delays, for a period related to the vehicles speed, and captures a third frame, also a wide angle image showing the time delay between frames. The two wide-angle images can be used as evidence to show that the vehicle was moving at the time of the recording.

At traffic signal junctions the state of traffic signals is continuously monitored and their 'on' time recorded by the system. When the red aspect is detected, a timer is started. When this timer exceeds the programmed 'time into red' the two road loops are monitored for detection of a moving vehicle. If a vehicle is detected the program proceeds to violation capture, then two wide-angle images and one zoom image of the vehicle are recorded.

Digital cameras record data relating to the offence and save the information along with the images that are taken. This data will vary according to the specific type of enforcement system installed. Information recorded with violation images taken by the system include:

- Site Identification, Name and Location
- Date and Time
- Lane and Head Number
- Offence and Frame Number
- Time into Red
- Previous Amber Time
- Speed

The information is encrypted, protected with message authenticated codes, and then stored ready for subsequent transmissions to a central computer. A built in flash module permits operation at night and uses three flash tubes. This means that the time between shots will be a lot quicker than single operating flash units, as no time is required to recharge the flash tube in between violation images.

Changeable operational parameters include:

- Flash Setting
- Speed Threshold
- Time into Red
- Selection of Specific Time Frames for Operation
- Statistics - Survey of Traffic usage
- Systems Alarm

By using digital technology this allows the data to be collected and transmitted automatically with minimal delay, normally within two minutes of the offence occurring, over a data network. Once the data is encrypted it can be transmitted to the back office via any communications protocol.

## GROUP NIGHT REVIEWS

### 2nd November 2005

Our thanks to Roger Rowland who came along in November 2005 on behalf of the Driving Standards Agency. Roger introduced himself and shared with us his career history. He started off as a Royal Navy Engineer and in the 1970's worked for Barnes Coaches as a driver, after which he was employed by the Fire Services and Police Services. For the last 18 months he has been employed by the DSA as an examiner at the Swindon Test Centre. The new DVD "Arrive Alive Classic" which came out in September was shown and this is an excellent way of passing information to children and grandchildren (17-21 year olds).

Roger reminded us that the Test Centre was previously located at Lethbridge Road, in Old Town this was up until 1982. On checking my licence I passed my driving test in January 1981 and still remember the old building and taking the sight test by looking along the row of cars parked outside. It seems unbelievable that was 25 years ago.

The driving test was first introduced in 1935 when there was around one and a half million drivers on the road, today that number stands at approximately 20 million.

The learner driver starts off with having to spend £38.00 to get their Provisional licence. Then the average number of hours with an ADI having driving lessons is approximately 45 hours, which at a cost of £23.00 per lesson, with some of the Driving Schools, soon adds up to a lot of money. The national pass rate is only 43% and the DSA have called for better quality of instruction and have expressed concern at the standard of candidates presenting for the test.

There are currently 4 examiners in Swindon and each one has 7 slots per day for taking learner drivers out for their tests, each test would normally take 35/40 minutes. The Government say that the maximum waiting time for taking the test should be no more than 6 weeks but Swindon is currently running at 7 weeks. They also carry out testing for disabled drivers and their test time is extended and more paperwork has to be completed and sent off to DVLA at Swansea.

Young drivers are encouraged to go on to take the Pass Plus. This costs approx. £60 for 6 runs and is recognised by many insurance companies - some will offer up to 35% off their premiums. For more information log on to [www.pass-plus.org.uk](http://www.pass-plus.org.uk). Another useful web site for learner drivers is [www.helpingldrivers.com](http://www.helpingldrivers.com) - this is maintained by RoSPA with funding by the Department for Transport.

Once again many thanks go out to Roger for his time and an excellent presentation.

## **7th December 2005**

We were very grateful to David Douch for standing in at the last minute after I received a message from Peter Amor, who was due to give a talk on behalf of Fish Brother (Fiat/Alfa Romeo) on purchasing new cars. Peter had to cancel due to family commitments.

David started the evening by talking from his own experiences of working in the motoring industry for many years. The initial thinking of the manufacture of a new car, who the car is designed for, the cost of production and market it is aimed at.

90% of vehicle manufacturing is carried out by automated robots, so all the plant and tools have to be specially designed and built. Much goes into the “Design - Manufacture and Marketing ” of a vehicle. With all these costs it is amazing that you and I can go down to a Show Room and purchase a brand new car for as little as £6000.

Later in the evening we split into two groups and David gave us the task of writing down the number of individual parts that it would take to construct a car door. The reason behind this, was to show how complex the manufacturing of the whole of a vehicle would be.

It is not easy to find someone to come along and give an interesting and informative talk but for David to volunteer at a couple of days notice was much appreciated.

**5<sup>th</sup> April 2006**

With low numbers for our April Group night, we still managed to make our Guest Speakers feel very welcome. Bob Sanderson and Shirley Cox from the St John Ambulance Caring for Life, came along with 5 Annies (Resuscitation Dummies).

The talk was about Adult Basic Life Support. Having unpacked the Annies and laid them out on the floor, Bob talked us through how to approach a person that had collapsed on the floor, whether it was at home or whilst out. The first rule is to ensure that you are not putting yourself at risk with any liquids or electrics that may be on the floor where the person is lying. First check for any response, if the person fails to respond, **shout** for help. This is known as “Shake and Shout”. If you still get no response you should then go on to check the airways and if the person is breathing. If not open their mouth and see if anything is blocking the throat, clear away anything that may be blocking the airway. If after 10 seconds you cannot feel or hear them breathing start CPR. (Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation)

The most important thing is to make sure someone has called for an ambulance, if you are on your own make that call yourself before you commence CPR. The ambulance team will then be on their way. It is most unlikely that you will be able to restart someone’s heart and getting a paramedic with a defibrillator to shock the heart back to normal rhythm is paramount.

When first introduced, it was thought that 15 compressions to 2 breaths was the best way to keep the person alive. The medical fraternity now work with the belief that it is better to do 30 compression to 2 breaths as this helps to circulate the oxygenated blood to the vital organs. One of the other changes is that you don’t have to try to find the pulse, this is time consuming and most people are not that sure of the correct place to check for a pulse and what they are feeling for.

Bob then carried out a demonstration on one of the Annies. We then paired off and tried out what Bob had shown us. Some of us found tilting the head of the dummy back and holding the nose whilst breathing into the mouth difficult and the chest cavity failed to inflate, whilst others found that placing the hands in the right place on the chest and pushing down just as hard. Bob and Shirley went around and gave individual instruction.

We then talked about putting someone into the “Recovery Position” and had fun practicing on each other. Again you should never compromise your safety. **Shout** for help and ensure an ambulance is called. Check the area around the person, if they are breathing but not conscious, check their pockets for keys or hard objects that may dig into them when turned onto their side. Also check for sharp rings on hands as these may cause further injuries. Decide which is the best side to turn them onto, then raise the lower arm above their head, bend the opposite leg at the knee, whilst applying gentle pressure to the knee bring the other hand up and place under the side of their face. Monitor them regularly and keep them warm, wait for a paramedic.

If you come across someone that is bleeding heavily, find something to pad over the bleed and raise the limb, call for help. It is important to keep the patient quiet and warm. Another one of the training techniques that have changed over time, is not to put a tourniquet on the bleeding limb, as if not monitored correctly, you could stop the circulation to the injured persons hand/limb.

Bob gave us a handout for quick reference and I still have a few copies spare if anyone would like one, handy for the glove box or first aid kit.

The evening was extremely interesting and our thanks go out to Bob and Shirley for their very informative talk.

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

## A HIRE CAR PRE USE CHECKLIST

**IF YOU HIRE A VEHICLE THIS SUMMER (OR AT ANY OTHER TIME)  
CHECK THE FOLLOWING BEFORE DRIVING IT AWAY!**

### ***Vehicle Condition***

- Condition of external bodywork, panels boot lid bonnet, look for dents damage etc especially on the ends of bumpers and rear of the car.
- Condition of the inside of the vehicle, (cockpit) seats, floor mats etc.
- Check which fuel the vehicle uses, Diesel or Unleaded etc.

### ***Safety Checks - Outside the Car***

- Operate and familiarise yourself with the locking and unlocking sequence.
- Demister controls and operation - do this first to allow demisting whilst other checks are carried out.
- Tyres visual checks on - lumps, cuts, inflation, tread depth (indicator bars)
- Lights - switch on lights and check, headlights, main beam, sidelights, indicators, hazard, and fog lights, reversing lights if fitted.
- Horn - give the horn a quick tap to operate do not fully depress.
- Windscreen wipers and washer - effective (including rear if fitted).

## ***Safety Checks - Inside the Car***

- Seatbelt operation - engage belt and pull to check locking.
- Seat position - ensure you can operate the pedals without stretching, ensure seat is locked into position.
- Seat Back - adjust to allow both hands to be put on the top of the steering wheel without having to stretch. (You may be able to adjust the steering wheel as well).
- Headrest setting - adjust to ensure head contacts centre of headrest.
- General vision limitations front and rear, i.e. pillars at sides of front screen.
- Mirror Rear View - centralise to show as much of rear screen as possible.
- Mirror Doors - adjust to show 50% land and 50% sky with the body of the car just showing on the inner edge.
- Gear selection - work the gear stick through the gear selection gates returning the lever to neutral (depress clutch for manual transmission).

## ***Other Considerations***

- Set your required radio station or the entertainment system before moving off.
- Keep your speed low for the first 5 miles of travel to acclimatise to the vehicle characteristics.
- Make sure you have planned the onward journey from the vehicle pick up point.

- Make sure that if you are going to have to return the vehicle with a full tank, you should note the whereabouts of a garage near to the pick up point. If returning empty do not take the chance of running out of fuel.
  - Ensure that you are not putting your personal security at risk whilst checking the car, ensure that you can enter and lock the vehicle at any time and keep alert to other people in your proximity.
  - If you find a significant fault do not be tempted to ignore it, inform the hire vendor and insist on a replacement vehicle.
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## REAR SEATBELTS

Alan Stillman has brought to our attention the following item from the Motoring Section of the *Daily Telegraph*:

*"According to the Driving Instructor's Association, on average one person is killed every week in the front seat of a car after being hit by a back-seat passenger not wearing a seat belt. Wearing rear seatbelts became compulsory in 1991 yet only 54% of adults belt up in the back, according to recent research. If a car crashes at 30 mph an unrestrained back seat passenger will hit the seat in front with a force of between 30 and 60 times their body weight".*

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## DAYTIME RUNNING LIGHTS

The European Commission is looking into ways of improving road safety and at equipping new cars with "ecologically-friendly" daytime running lights

There is a commitment by EU member states to equip new vehicles with these lights, though having such lights would not force people to use them.

Member states' practices differ on the issue and European Transport Commissioner Jacques Barrot is currently consulting all EU member states on what is considered "a sensitive matter".

## SUMMER DRIVING

It is often said that a healthy obsession with the weather constitutes an important part of the British character. Perhaps this isn't so surprising when you consider that we enjoy some of the most variable weather conditions in the world. Most people would agree that the seasons are part of what makes our nation but we should remember that when the weather changes suddenly it can make for dangerous conditions on the roads.

Winter is usually thought of as the season when the most severe weather occurs, but summer can throw up some particular dangers too - the most serious being heavy showers and flash flooding. These heavy, sometimes torrential downpours are usually rain, but sometimes include hail which can very quickly make for treacherous driving conditions with thousands of marble-like balls of ice covering the road in a very short time. These showers are usually preceded and followed by bright sunshine with sudden changes from wet to dry conditions - watch out for these!

Here are some points to remember :

### *Driving in extreme / hot conditions*

- NEVER leave a child, baby or animal alone or unattended inside a vehicle. This could result in the child or pet becoming overheated.
- Before setting out listen to weather forecasts on the radio or television or via the web.
- Allow extra time for your journey. You may need to stop several times to take refreshment to avoid dehydration. Give yourself extra time and think ahead.
- Drive carefully - you are responsible for your own safety, your passengers' safety, your vehicle and other road users.
- In particularly extreme weather consider whether your journey is necessary or whether it can be delayed. If you have to go out, take adequate fluids and sun protection for your journey.

### ***Make sure you can be seen***

- If the visibility is reduced due to sun glare remember this will make it difficult for you at times whilst travelling

### ***Driver fatigue and stress***

- In extreme weather conditions, driver fatigue and stress can increase and more breaks may be required. It is important to keep your fluid intake up.

### ***Take account of extreme weather conditions before your journey***

- Check the weather forecasts
- Consider if the journey is necessary
- Consider alternative routes
- Allow a time for the journey which relates to the weather conditions.

### ***To be prepared for extreme weather these items may be useful for the car***

- Mobile phone
- Fresh drinking water
- A radio and spare batteries
- A torch
- Sun blinds for the windows
- Spare clothing

## M31 - THE MISSING LINK

Many readers who regularly use the southern section of the M25 will be aware of the popular diversionary route using the A329(M), A322 and M3 avoiding the congested Heathrow section of the M25.

Today the A329(M) runs only as far as Bracknell, from where the A322 takes you on a “scenic” journey through a number of Surrey villages before joining the M3.

Historical research reveals that in the 1970's it was proposed that a motorway - provisionally designated the M31- be constructed to cover the whole route to the M3 and beyond. This would have absorbed the A329(M). This motorway would have joined the M25 at Junction 10 - the A3 junction. Apparently the planning for this motorway was well advanced and accounts for the large size of the M4/A329(M) junction. It should be noted that scholars of motorway nomenclature are now speculating that in fact a M2x number might actually have been used had the project been completed.

If this motorway had been constructed it would have shortened the journey from Swindon to the South East, the Channel Ports and Channel Tunnel by at least ten miles as well as reducing journey times. There could also have been benefits for road safety and the local economy too.

It may be difficult to resurrect the project in today's climate as the route as originally proposed runs through the environmentally sensitive Bracknell Forest area.

It is likely, however, that plans for a massive house building programme in the South East and Thames Valley will inevitably lead to pressures for a reappraisal of transport infrastructure and as a result the proposal may once again see the light of day in some form.

## CHIEF OBSERVER'S SPOT

I should like to start by thanking all of the observers for their hard work getting new associates ready for test and also by inviting full members to join the Observer Team. We will of course assist you to meet the challenge!

I should also like to welcome **David Grey** to the Observer Team, he has been observing "Up North", and I am sure that he will be a valuable asset to the Group.

Now, as some of you will know, I live just off the A4 in Marlborough and regularly walk along and cross the A4. Every time I do so, I see many drivers using their handheld mobile phones driving past a school, whilst the school pupils are crossing the road. These include professional HGV drivers as well as drivers of Passenger Carrying Vehicles. The fines for these drivers are a good deal higher than for the car driver and conviction could cost also them their livelihoods. I am sure that you have also seen people using their phone while driving. Do you make allowances when you see one behind you? Do you allow a greater distance between yourself and the vehicle ahead?

The danger of using a handheld phone whilst driving is the same as being over the drink driving Limits. Research shows that reaction times were, on average, 30% slower when talking on a mobile than when just over the legal limit, and nearly 50% slower than when driving normally - **Stay safe on the roads.**

**Les Brown**

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## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

**2nd August 2006**

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

**6th September 2006**

**Annual General Meeting** at the **Blunsdon House Hotel** followed by **Graham Mearns** speaking on his **Swindon to Zurich bicycle ride.**