

EAST KENT GROUP

Newsletter December 2008

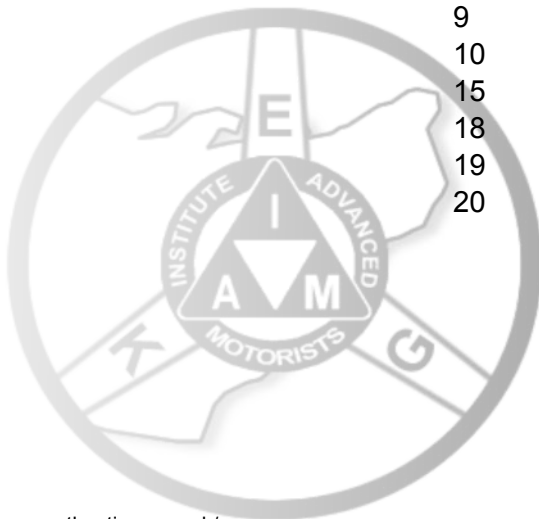
IAM

DRIVING ROAD SAFETY



Contents

Your Committee	2
Editorial 125	3
From the Chair	4
Our AGM Reports	5
Secretary's Corner	9
Contributions	10
Press Releases	15
About Us	18
Drive-In Centre	19
Membership Updates	20



OFFICERS

Nigel Cooke nigel@eastkentiam.org.uk	CHAIRMAN 55, Leyburne Road, Dover. CT16 1SL	01304 215891
--	--	--------------

Vanessa Norley vanessa@eastkentiam.org.uk	SECRETARY 2 Barn Tye Close, Guston, Dover. CT15 5ND	01304 215168
---	--	--------------

Neil Oliver	TREASURER 22, Cornwall Road, Herne Bay. CT6 7SY	01227 369138
--------------------	--	--------------

Jane Clarke jane@eastkentiam.org.uk	MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY 20, Dumpton Park Drive, Ramsgate. CT118AE	01843 594910
---	---	--------------

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Alan Hollands alan@eastkentiam.org.uk	CHIEF OBSERVER 32 Hastings Avenue, Margate. CT9 2SG	01843 224123
---	--	--------------

Jane Clarke jane@eastkentiam.org.uk	DRIVE-IN CO-ORDINATOR 20, Dumpton Park Drive, Ramsgate. CT118AE	01843 594910
---	--	--------------

Elizabeth Cooper elizabeth@eastkentiam.org.uk	ASSOCIATE CO-ORDINATOR 31 Charlton Avenue, Dover. CT16 2LZ	01304 204405
---	---	--------------

Ian Martin ian@eastkentiam.org.uk	COMMITTEE MEMBER 1 Freechurch Cottage, Deal Road, Worth, Deal. CT14 0BH	01304 613718
---	--	--------------

Michelle Stone michelle@eastkentiam.org.uk	EDITOR (ex-officio) Flat 5, 13 Paragon, Ramsgate. CT11 9JX	01843 588464
--	---	--------------

Richard Meadows richardm@eastkentiam.org.uk	PUBLICITY (ex-officio) 32, School Lane, Blean, Canterbury. CT2 9JA	01227 453728
---	---	--------------

If you need to contact any of the above, please do so before 10 PM.
Should the person you require not be available, please contact any other member who will deal with your enquiry or pass on your message as soon as possible.

This time last year I was announcing the new addition to our family. Baby James is now just over a year old, and into everything. He is walking, climbing and for a while had permanent bruises from head butting the floor so frequently. He has fully mastered walking now, which will prove exhausting when we go on holiday to Fuerteventura in a couple of weeks. There is nothing like a small child and a nearby swimming pool to keep you on your toes!!

I for one am looking forward to the warmer weather, driving on the wrong side of the road and just generally having a break from everyday life. This year has been challenging, with more trials and tribulations on the way. I now also have new neighbours who apparently have no concept of basic courtesy. They woke me up at 2 am this morning and continued to make a lot of noise, which was annoying to say the least. Then at 3 am a taxi driver buzzed my flat. It is a very loud buzzer that never fails to scare the living daylight out of you, even when expected. I stomped upstairs and asked if they might like to keep the noise down. Then they started playing a guitar, and at 4am another taxi driver again buzzed my flat. This one felt obliged to try and play a little tune. I eventually got to sleep at about 5 am. I'm hoping this is just a temporary aberration, although 2 nights in a row, and 2 weekends in a row doesn't bode well for future happy relations.

Mini Jock is now officially in winter hibernation, having been SORN'ed and tucked up in his little mini shaped cover. I have a new job working from home, so the daily commute to work is considerably shorter. I decided 2 vehicles for a once a week trip to Sturry was possibly not necessary, so decided to use the motorbike as it is cheaper to run. Mind you

I have spent the last few years being a fair-weather biker, (well trying anyway, but given the weather we've had the last few summers the term 'fair-weather biker' is actually more like wishful thinking!), and now have the delights of winter biking to look forward to... The cold, rain, not being able to see because everything steams up when you breathe... It is in fact very like driving a mini in the winter, so pretty much situation normal really!

I'll close out my waffle by wishing you ll a Merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year!

Michelle

Please send me any articles, letters, rants, suggestions or comments, either by e-mail to: michelle@eastkentiam.org.uk, or by snail mail to: Flat 5, 13 Paragon, Ramsgate, Kent, CT11 9JX

I do occasionally stop and meditate about things. This has been made easier for me of late because I have acquired some more time. Or rather, I have the same amount of time, but it is organised differently. More of it comes under the heading of leisure time, as, in common with very many others, my level of economic activity is curtailed somewhat, and looks like it will be for a fair while yet.

Time to think about the more pressing commitments, to see how they can be reduced or dealt with more efficiently: time to think what I have to do anyway, what I can delay, or put off completely, and, of course, what I want to do. So, I have to do Christmas, I can delay new kitchen or new car, I can put off my world cruise (again!), and then think what I actually want to do.

Well, what do I want to do? I want to keep driving, keep driving safely, and above all keep driving the IAM way, according to the System of Car Control. And it won't cost me anything, or not much, up front, to do so. It will reduce wear and tear on my car: the tyres, brakes, some fuel costs, reduce the wear and tear on me, and reduce the chance of putting my fellow citizens in hospital unnecessarily and spoiling their Christmas. It will increase my own chances of having a crash-free Christmas, New Year, and beyond.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Nigel

Chairman's Report 2008

This is my take on the activities of the East Kent Group of the IAM over the year.

My Chairmanship followed on from Sheila Redwood, who very ably served as Chairman for last year, and was also for a number of years Secretary of the Group before that. It was Sheila who got me interested in the IAM initially. So it is her fault I am here.

We have our Social Meetings here at Littlebourne every month, and have a varied selection of speakers, and sometimes entertainers, including Magic from Clyde Clayton, and a second visit from Ley Liberson talking about Life on the Ocean Wave. On a more motoring-related theme, we have had a VW buggies evening, with all things air-cooled VW, and Nick Williams on the Speed Awareness courses he is involved in for offending drivers. Christine Grange, the first female police traffic officer in Kent in 1974, our manoeuvring evening at Hersden in June, and just last month Peter Roger, the IAM Chief Examiner, came to talk.

The Group does not run itself, and those of you who read our newsletter may have noticed the Committee members listed on page 2. The Committee give their time and effort free of charge to keep the Group working as it should, problem solving, coming up with new ideas and implementing them. There are changes to the Committee this year; some people are standing down, and there is some changing around of posts. I would like to place my thanks to them on record.

Carol Stone, our Membership Secretary, is standing down. She has kept tabs on who has paid, or not, and chased them up as

necessary. Thank you very much Carol. Jane Clarke, who already serves on the Committee as Drive-In Coordinator, is now to take on the duties of Membership Secretary as well. Richard Hazell, Chief Observer for five years, is also standing down. Thank you, Richard, for five years of keeping the Observers under control, organising their testing and maintaining their standards, along with training of new Observers, among other things. Alan Hollands, Currently Deputy Chief Observer, and Training Officer is taking up the post of Chief Observer.

Neil Oliver continues to keep tracks on our money and what we do with it in his quiet and efficient manner, sometimes allows us to spend money, and makes sure we don't spend what we haven't got. Vanessa Norley has warmed to the role of Secretary, and always seems to be all organised and sorted out, unlike me. Elizabeth Cooper looks after the allocation of Associates to Observers, although I think Associates are a bit thin on the ground of late, hopefully this will change with a sunnier economic outlook. The Newsletter goes out to every member, and binds the group together, giving people relevant news, information and sometimes entertainment, and allowing their voice to be heard. The Website has potentially a huge audience, does much the same, and Michelle Stone is editor of both. Ian Martin has recently joined the Committee, and we have an intermittent but enthusiastic Publicity Officer in Richard Meadows.

We would like to invite new people on to the Committee who may have a contribution to make. Two hours or so every two months is all it takes.

Vanessa, our Secretary, attended the All Groups Conference, this last weekend,

and, perhaps inevitably, the subject of the increased membership cost was discussed, and the question was asked as to what members get for their subscription. I will leave you with the point made by David Kenworthy, the Chairman of the IAM. He reminded people that the IAM is a Road Safety Charity, and that members are getting charitable work for their subscription, and maybe should see it in that way, like other charitable organisations.

Thank you,

*Nigel Cooke
Chairman, East Kent Group*

CHIEF OBSERVER'S ANNUAL REPORT 9th October 2008

It has been another busy and challenging year on the Associates and Observers front.

ASSOCIATES

As The Associates Co-ordinator has stated, for the period between April 2007 and March 2008, we achieved 9 less passes than in the corresponding period in the previous year, However, for the period April 2008 to date, we have achieved 6 more passes than in the corresponding period last year.

These figures essentially reflect the difficulties we experienced when our examiner Peter Hall retired and we were short of Examiners" This problem has now been addressed by H.Q and we have at least 2 more Examiners for the area. We may improve on the number of Test passes as we currently have a number awaiting Tests.

So thanks are due to Vanessa Norley, our Secretary and to the Mid-Kent Group for liaising with H.Q. in respect of this problem.

In addition to the Observed drives, we have had 10 Drive-Checks during the last twelve months. These are one-offs which are undertaken in addition to the Observed Drives allocated to the Observers involved. The Drive-Checks appear to have been used more by older drivers, perhaps as a result of Insurance Companies reluctance to Insure the over 80's.

A positive outcome of the Drive-Checks is that a significant number have gone on to become members.

Our "drop-out" rate is still too high, and whilst some of the reasons given are still due to their personal circumstances, too high a number just give up because "it's not their thing", or a Test failure, or even having to wait too long for a Test, thereby losing their interest or enthusiasm. At a time when the "credit Crunch" appears to have affected the referral rate, we need to attempt to identify the causes of such a high "drop-out" rate.

OBSERVERS

We currently have 26 Observers, made up of 7 S.O.'s, 13 Qualified Observers and 6 Trainees at various stages of development. The number of runs and hours that it is taking us to get an Associate through the Test, is still a matter of concern.

For the period April '07 to March '08, the average number of Observed Drives was 9.5, an increase of a further .15 runs over the corresponding period of the previous Year, and the average number of hours has gone up to 14.65 a further increase of 65. To clarify, in the last 2 years, the average number of runs has gone up by 2.25 runs, and the time taken has gone up by 3.65 hours.

Whilst these figures are affected by Associates who have needed in excess of 20 hours to get through the Test, we must remain watchful lest we get into the realm of the 2 hour Observed Drive, which is in excess even of the time required for a Test.

The ideal to work to remains that of the one hour Observed Drive, including the Briefing and De-briefing, and a programme of 8 Observed Drives. It is recognised that in exceptional circumstances, more drives and more time are merited, but we should remember that when allowing an Associate undue number of Drives and hours, a new Associate will be kept waiting for allocation.

It is a sad aspect of voluntary work that people come and go, and certainly a proportion of our Observers are such transients. It is sad to reflect that a number of Observers have moved on to other things, mainly through work pressure, so we bid them a fond farewell, thank them for their contribution to Road Safety, and wish them well in the future.

It is also good to reflect on the fact that Ted Willey and Alan Hollands have returned to action following ill health.

Ted Willey again comes top of the "Passes" list along with Richard Hazell, each with 3 Passes, with Ron Sims and Richard Meadows, 2 passes apiece.

TRAINING

The Training programme was affected by Alan Holland's ill health, but we have been able to hold 2 training courses this year, the second of which is currently in progress.

We also enjoyed a "Training" evening when joined by Mid-Kent Observers to listen to a presentation by Chris Gilbert on Instruction Techniques.

Alan is still hopeful of holding an Observers Sunday for all Observers, on a "Drop-In" basis during the coming year.

DRIVE-IN

The Drive-In has again seen a monthly attendance of around 10 people, and Jane Clark would like to thank all members who regularly come along to offer their support.

On average we see 5 Observers each month resulting in around 4 drives with Associates, who are normally new members.

The Drive-In was promoted at the Canterbury Law Courts earlier this year, but unfortunately this has not resulted in any increased attendance, although it ultimately succeeded in the recruitment of 2 new Examiners.

Jane would like to remind all members to come along on the first Sunday of each month (except January) for coffee and biscuits (and mince tarts in December), a chat and a refresher drive. Please tell your friends and acquaintances about it. Jane is ready and willing to supply you with posters advertising the Drive-In.

FINALLY

This should be my final report as Chief Observer as I am standing down to make way for new blood.

It remains for me to thank Vanessa. Alan, Elizabeth and Jane for having shared my burden, and all the Observers for their and the Committee's support over my time as Chief Observer.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to serve the Group and the IAM.

Richard Hazell, Chief Observer

Associate Co-ordinators Report 2008

As of 30.09.08 we have 38 Active associates and 16 current Non-active associates. They have decided, in most cases, that studying for the test was not for them. Where possible, we have been able to allocate associates to observers within a short time of their joining but the observers have not always been in the same area as the associates so occasionally this has been a problem.

For the year 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008 we achieved 18 passes, which is down on the previous year, mainly due to problems with examiners. However, for the period from 1 April 2008 to date, we have had 15 passes and we have associates waiting for test dates, so the annual total compared to last year will be increased.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Observers, especially Richard Hazell, for the help and support that I have received from them during the past year.

Test Passes

01.04.06 - 31.03.07 - 28 passes

01.04.07 - 31.03.08 - 18 passes

01.04.07 - 30.09.07 - 9 passes

01.04.08 - 30.09.08 - 15 passes

Elizabeth

Income and Expenditure Account for Year Ended 31 May 2008

See over page

Neil

EAST KENT GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS (Registered Charity No. 1049659)
 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
 FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2008

		2008		2007	
	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p
Income					
Subscriptions:					
Group Full Members	1,410.00		1,550.00		
Group Associate Members	1,125.00		1,314.00		
Group Friends	<u>6.00</u>	2,541.00	<u>12.00</u>	2,876.00	
Profit on Raffles & Socials		89.94		174.53	
Sales from Group Shop		157.49		217.00	
Outside Events		47.15		13.80	
Drive Check		70.00		5.00	
Donation		5.00		5.00	
Gift Aid		413.67		427.86	
Bank Interest		522.38		411.48	
Total Income		<u>3,846.63</u>		<u>4,130.67</u>	
Expenses					
Postage		384.88		364.25	
Newsletter Production		397.60		402.50	
Stationery		237.95		288.42	
Room Hire		288.00		306.00	
Group Insurance		52.50		51.45	
Publicity		0.00		139.94	
Associate and Observer Training Expenses		1,010.28		625.00	
Speakers' Expenses		145.00		100.00	
Equipment Depreciation		573.71		411.32	
Group Shop Cost of Sales		128.09		185.55	
Stocks Written Off		116.91		0.00	
Sundry Expenses		172.61		138.92	
Total Expenses		<u>3,505.53</u>		<u>2,974.15</u>	
Surplus for Year		<u>341.10</u>		<u>1,156.52</u>	

**BALANCE SHEET
 AS AT 31 MAY 2008**

		2008		2007	
	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p
Fixed Assets					
Equipment (At Cost)	1,996.97		2,053.09		
Accumulated Depreciation	<u>(1,571.41)</u>	425.56	<u>(1,198.35)</u>	854.74	
Current Assets					
Stocks	288.15		301.66		
Prepayments and Accrued Income	144.15		102.42		
Deposit Account	9,333.93		9,000.00		
Current Account	<u>584.77</u>		<u>142.99</u>		
	<u>10,361.00</u>		<u>9,547.07</u>		
Current Liabilities					
Sundry Creditors	<u>43.65</u>		<u>0.00</u>		
	<u>43.65</u>		<u>0.00</u>		
Net Current Assets		10,317.35		9,547.07	
Net Assets		<u>10,742.91</u>		<u>10,401.81</u>	
Capital Account					
Opening Balance		10,401.81		9,245.29	
Surplus for Year		341.10		1,156.52	
Closing Balance		<u>10,742.91</u>		<u>10,401.81</u>	

Nearly Christmas again, where does the time go?!

Harry (our Westie pup) is now 8 months old, he has wrecked a window blind, dug a hole in the lounge carpet, chewed the side of a storage chest, eaten my Tesco's petrol voucher and committed other misdemeanours too numerous to mention – he has no pocket money for at least 2 years! Never mind, we still love him to bits.

I attended the National Car Conference in October for the first time and found it very interesting. I was fortunate to join up with the Chairman of Mid Kent Group, Roger Vickery, and his wife which made it more enjoyable as I would otherwise have been on my own. As much of the day's content is reported in the latest edition of *Advanced Driving*, I won't repeat it here.

There were, however, one or two interesting pieces of information I picked up. For instance, there are 34 million cars in the UK with an average urban speed of 11mph – and doesn't it feel like it sometimes!! We have the highest rail fares in the world, no wonder we like our cars.

In China there are 20 cars per thousand people, in the US there are 950 per thousand. (We weren't told what the UK figures are.) Our fuel taxes in the UK are the highest in the world and raise £50 billion per annum. The average family pays £2000 per annum in fuel tax and vehicle excise duty. Geoff Hoon is the 38th Transport Minister since Labour came to power.

We are told that oil is definitely not running out, there are currently 3 trillion barrels ultimately recoverable, and the guesstimate is that there are probably 7 trillion barrels available. Sulphur levels and emissions are both down but the price

differentials between diesel and petrol will increase.

We are still looking for new Committee Members, let me know if you are interested.

Our December Social will feature retired Detective John Pearce talking about one of his cases, the talk is entitled 'Murder comes gift-wrapped' and I understand it was a local Kent incident.

In January our new Chief Observer, Alan Hollands, will be presenting a couple of motoring DVDs he has recently acquired and, in February, we have Professor Isenberg talking about 'The Magic of Bubbles'.

Whilst I do have a list of possible speakers for 2009, I would welcome any suggestions members may have – do tell me if you have any ideas or if there is anyone or anything in particular that would appeal to you for a Social evening/gathering.

I wish all of you an enjoyable and peaceful Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

Vanessa

Sat Nav, anyone?

I've had a Tom Tom Sat Nav for a few months now and wonder if other EKG members have had similar experiences to mine?

First a bit of an introduction to the uninitiated into world of Global Positioning System, or GPS for short. The system works by the set in your car/boat/cycle (yes really, there's GPS for cycles too!) receiving a signal from at least three of 24 satellites orbiting the globe which all send synchronous time signals, allowing the set you have to triangulate its self using its silicon brain thus plotting your position, speed, altitude and direction of travel extremely accurately. It needs to "see" the satellites fairly clearly, so they won't work inside buildings for example.

I've used GPS position finding equipment on my boat for about 10 years now so I'm fairly familiar with it. The early sets could take sometime to update the position from a moving platform but performance today is much improved. The first commercially sets for the leisure user came onto the market in the early 90's and cost about £2k then! They've come on in leaps and bounds since and of course the price has tumbled in that time to about £80 for a basic set today. The set I use afloat now has loads of very useful features too numerous to mention here - sort of Sat Nav on steroids if you like.

The GPS system is owned and operated by the US military – this is how they sent cruise missiles down Saddam's chimney from 600 miles away. The US Government reserve the right to turn off / jam or otherwise degrade the signal where and when they see fit to do so, though their military still have the use of its full

capabilities; presumably "Terry Taliban's" set is not too accurate in Helmand Province at the moment!

The last time signal degradation affecting the UK happened to my knowledge was at the start of the second Gulf War. The UK Coastguard were advising mariners that accuracy of the system was reduced to about within a 100 metres which is OK(ish) at sea but pretty "iffy" for a car Sat Nav! As the events of 9/11 began to unfold, there was pressure to turn the system off then, but as so many aircraft, mariners and all sorts of folk worldwide depend on GPS it was decided to allow the system to remain in operation as shutting it down would probably have caused more deaths than Al Qaeda had.

Using GPS and mobile 'phone technology it is now possible for, say, truck owners to monitor the whereabouts of their vehicles at any time for security purposes and give their customers accurate arrival times. Many bus, train and ship operators use a similar system. Of course they can see if the driver is speeding or taking the long way round too!

The European Space Agency (ESA) is placing into orbit a similar system to GPS called "Galileo" that will do everything the existing one does and is rumoured to be linked to a Europe - wide road pricing system, using a transponder (radio) device (non optionally!!) fitted to cars. Big brother or what!

So what about the piece of kit fitted to the windscreen or indeed installed in the vehicle by the manufacturers? Is it a saviour or a menace? I have mixed feelings on the subject. They are potentially distracting; the temptation to re-programme on the move is obvious as are the

voice/text prompts and moving display. We can only deal with so much information at any time; think of the times when driving somewhere in an unfamiliar town or city. We turn off the radio or ask a companion to help look for our destination rather than engage in unrelated chat to “lose” potential distractions and help us concentrate (yes, I know about ladies and multi – tasking!). Arguably Sat Nav takes all the stress from this situation, but my experience is that it can actually increase stress levels as one tends to monitor it more frequently when nearing the destination, or when it gives instructions late due to not getting a good signal or poor mapping software. There are stories abounding of villages finding themselves inundated with traffic as they are on a on a Sat Nav “short cut”, or where HGV’s are routed down narrow roads they won’t fit down etc.

Having followed my Sat Nav’s suggested routes in familiar areas I’ve found it will often take a slower, longer route than I would’ve chosen for the time/area. Granted I do not use the “Bluetooth” (mobile ‘phone) technology that will inform me (?) of traffic problems ahead and redirect me as appropriate as I can’t justify the cost for the traffic monitoring subscription service.

Don’t get me wrong here, Sat Nav is useful. It will get you to your destination (provided you put the right address in!!) and I’m sure it’s transformed the way delivery drivers, taxi drivers and the like go about their business. I find relying solely on the Sat Nav, just “turn left next” or whatever without knowing beforehand where I’m being taken to be unsettling. It’s as though I’m not fully in control somehow; I just don’t feel right with it!

I would bet the majority of Advanced Drivers have no problem reading a map

and working out their route before setting out. Aside from traditional paper maps, there are numerous sites on the internet that can find an address and allow you to print off a map with detailed directions. In “sea speak” this would be the basis of your passage plan – working out your route beforehand so you become familiar with any hazards, features or simply the names of places or things along the way, so the next time we go somewhere we will have hopefully already have some idea about where, how far and in which direction we’re going. This is how we learn after all!

All electronic navigation aids used at sea come with a warning – they are aids and should not be used as a primary source for navigation and I think the same should apply to the roads too. What do you think?

Martin Male

A PHYSICIST WRITES . . . September 2008

I don’t know if what I write stays with you for long, after you have read it, but some things certainly stay in my own head, worrying away until I feel I have to focus on them again. Last February, I compared accelerating from 0 to 60 in twenty seconds with doing it in ten (then staying at 60 mph). I calculated that the difference was just five seconds’ journey time. So my advice was: take it easy!

Afterwards it occurred to me too that adopting the slower take-off might save fuel. On the other hand, you are putting the same amount of kinetic energy into the car whatever the rate of acceleration (as someone pointed out to me), so maybe there’s no difference in consumption. Ever since, I’ve wondered which really is the

most economical: accelerating fiercely, or just 'briskly' or — my own instinct — gently?

This is not a question of physics only, and I've been lucky to find a contact in the automotive industry to supply the answer (I decided not to complicate the question by asking him about hybrids!). I wasn't surprised to learn that several different factors come into play.

A petrol engine runs most efficiently when the throttle is wide open and the speed of the engine is near the middle of its working range. In other words, these conditions convert each drop of fuel into the greatest amount of 'mechanical' energy. But you have to remember that much of this is used up in overcoming rolling friction and (especially) combating air drag on the vehicle. The latter becomes seriously large at higher speeds.

Now, if you go for maximum acceleration, first you are taking the engine to high revs, and then you're travelling a greater distance while up at your cruising speed, pushing against the air drag. This isn't so good! Therefore I was right to think that it is rather more economical (in terms of miles per gallon) to accelerate less fiercely — that is, with the pedal still a good way down but not over-revving the engine.

But what about accelerating more calmly still? Doing this, you are definitely running the engine inefficiently, because the throttle will be half open or less. So the message is: if there's a clear road ahead of you, get a bit of a move on. Similarly you won't be wasting fuel if, for example, there's a tailgater behind and you put your foot down for a second (when they least expect it, if possible) hoping they will then stay clear: see my January 2007 column.

Anyway, having absorbed this message I'm certainly in the habit of accelerating more briskly than I used to (while still aiming to move the pedal slowly to avoid jerky travel), which compensates somewhat for the time lost through my other habit — when I remember to apply it — of lifting off early to slow down, in order not to waste more fuel.

The problem with this livelier acceleration is that you tend to reach the speed limit sooner than you realize! And don't forget, there's no escaping the rule that the higher your cruising speed, the lower your overall mpg will be. This applies even to diesel-powered vehicles, whose engines (I was told) have a more constant efficiency than petrol engines, over a range of speeds and accelerations. The overriding reason is the increasing air drag as you go faster.

From acceleration to deceleration: last year our newsletter editor gave us his opinion of the yellow lines you encounter (often with a bump) across the carriageway on a fast approach to a roundabout. He complained that as they get progressively closer together, they distort your judgement of how quickly you are slowing down. Also (he said to me later), the bumps must affect your braking capability in an emergency.

They may be gentle, but in bouncing your wheels even slightly they surely do increase your braking distance, even if (I guess) ABS systems take them in their stride. You sometimes meet thinner bump-lines similarly getting closer together as you approach a 30 mph sign. There, absurdly, they are laid right across the road — so if they have any effect on you at all, then when you are leaving town in the other direction they must make you think you're not speeding up fast enough!

Worse still, in Fleet where the A323 arrives from the north-west you find not one but two vicious rumble-strips, each one slowing you down whether you are entering the 30 limit or trying to accelerate in the opposite direction.

But the ultimate silliness, I think, is on the edge of Fittleworth in West Sussex, where they laid bump-lines on the approach to a 30 sign and then later they moved the sign out to beyond the lines. So now you get not only a late reminder to slow down but also, in the other direction, an early encouragement to accelerate. I suppose, though, that this matches how most drivers tend to react to speed-limit signs anyway, and many signs are probably sited a bit further away from town than they would otherwise be, to allow for it.

As for the magnitudes of speed limits, you often feel these are chosen without rhyme or reason. Well, things are very different on the continent, it seems: the limits there are adjusted most carefully to the road conditions. One consequence I've heard about is that a certain grande route in the South of France has no less than eighteen changes of speed-limit in 25 km, switching between 50, 70 and 90 kph. Within one half-kilometre the limit alters three times! I'm told that even with the presence of repeaters in the 50 and 70 stretches, one forgets très facilement la limitation actuelle de vitesse.

October 2008

A reader suggested that I write a column on "the fantastic capabilities of the brain, in routine driving situations." Over the years I have looked at several of its capabilities in relation to driving (and fantastic is not too strong a word for them), but I think it would be interesting now to try to survey

everything that the brain does to keep you safe — and to put you at risk! — while you're at the wheel.

Driving is obviously a multi-task activity: many things are being done at once. Yet we are never concentrating on more than a small number of them at any time. The others are happening either semi-automatically (so we can focus attention on them if necessary), or subconsciously and out of our control. It's extraordinary to think that our brains acquired the ability to learn such a highly complex activity long before vehicles appeared. What evolutionary step gave us this power, you wonder, ready to be applied when the time came?

The first essential when we're driving is information. Most of it reaches us through the eyes, which send it on into the brain. Here, you might assume, the images from each retina are just put there for you to look at. Not at all: your subconscious brain deconstructs these two distorted, upside-down and mostly fuzzy images and, from the bits, builds an astonishing imaginary model of the scene in full 3D. This model is what you 'see' — usually with nearly all the items in it already recognized, from your vast memory of things.

And you wouldn't believe the quantity of high-speed brainwork that has gone into assembling it: detecting lines and boundaries, sensing colours and motion, then merging the input from the two eyes to grasp the solidness of objects, and finally trying to identify everything in view.

In order to cope with this huge subconscious workload, the brain has to set priorities. Sometimes these favour what you are consciously looking at while driving, and sometimes they don't. Either way, they can get you into trouble! For

example, when concentrating hard on a vehicle just ahead (whether it's parked or on the move) there's quite a risk of not seeing something significant happening further on, or to the side, simply because the brain decides it's not significant and so doesn't bring it to your conscious attention. Good advice, therefore, is always to keep your eyes and your attention moving around.

But even this can leave us unaware of vital things. Suppose a road is joining from the left, and you are rapidly scanning it (and your mirror) for merging traffic: if another car is exactly in line with the door-pillar, with only its front and rear ends visible, there's a real danger that the subconscious brain will not bother to connect them together and allow you to recognize them as the vehicle you are looking out for. Similarly, when only a small part of a car is visible in the side mirror, you may not see it as such. The answer, perhaps, is to remember to look consciously for the ends of vehicles, also for anything that appears not to be moving much (relative to your own car).

While all the information is coming in, different parts of the brain are interpreting traffic signs, monitoring traffic lights, coordinating your limbs to control the car, reacting to hazards, deciding if you should accelerate or slow down, planning the course ahead and then checking that you're keeping to it — and, all the while, consulting your memory of the rules of the road to ensure you stay within them. What a tangle of conscious, semi-automatic and subconscious processes working together!

I've said in the past that it's often not easy to estimate your speed (other than from the speedometer). But isn't the brain clever at judging relative speeds, in other words how

fast other vehicles are moving past you, or across your path. You know exactly where they will all be, at any point over the next few seconds ... or at least, you think you know. The problem is that the brain isn't nearly so good at detecting acceleration or braking (unless you see brake lights, of course). So you may need to allow quite a margin, when aiming to slip past another car.

Looking further at memory: your long-term memory holds not only the rules of the road as I mentioned (plus your own 'personal' driving rules and habits), but also knowledge of countless routes, both on the map and along real roads. And on the road, short-term memory is needed to remind you of the speed limit, what gear you're in, and what 'driving situation' you've just been through — in case you have to stop suddenly and be a witness!

Sometimes, though, I find myself realizing (you too?) that I have no recall at all of the last stretch of road or how I negotiated it. If my subconscious was doing the driving, was it doing it safely? And looking ahead (into the future, I mean), will I be able to detect when my driving really begins to deteriorate?

Because another thing the brain is clever at is concealing one's 'defects' from oneself: blind spots in the eyes, worsening reaction time to emergency situations, the onset of poor body coordination, or perhaps deterioration of the brain itself. No wonder that some ageing motorists are unaware — or they deny, at least — that their standard of driving is starting to drop. As for me, I am not even sure I've remembered to say everything that I meant to about the brain, in this column!

Peter Soul, Thames Valley Group

Motocyclists dying needlessly says IAM report. 4 December 2008

One in six motorcyclist deaths could result from hitting a crash barrier, and in such collisions a rider is 15 times more likely to be killed than a car occupant, according to new research released today by the IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists).

'Barriers to change: designing safe roads for motorcyclists' examines why crash barriers are life savers for car drivers but can kill vulnerable motorcyclists. Its findings are particularly critical of crash barrier support posts that can cause injuries five times more severe than in an average motorcycle crash.

IAM Director for research and policy, Neil Greig, said: "Although riders should take responsibility for their own safety, our road authorities must now 'Think Bike' and design crash barriers that give riders protection against the aggressive features that cause devastating injuries.

"France has retro-fitted lower rails to prevent riders hitting support posts at the most vulnerable sites on its road network, leading to rates of return of around 400 per cent. If it can be done in France it must now be done in the UK."

The research panel which produced the report in conjunction with the IAM and the European Road Assessment Programme (EuroRAP) is calling for new guidance on the design and use of 'motorcycle friendly' barriers.

EuroRAP's European Programme Director, Dr Joanne Hill says: "It wouldn't be possible to install 'motorcycle friendly barriers' across a nation's roads overnight. However the new report shows how some

countries are already assessing roads by systematic action to ensure that barriers are made safe for motorcyclists in areas of highest risk. The commitment by governments across Europe is needed to fund these high return safety programmes."

Keep seasonal excess off the roads says IAM. 1 December 2008

The IAM welcomes today's Government Christmas campaign launch. The police launch high-profile drink-drive campaigns at this time of year when unwary drivers enjoying seasonal pleasures can be tempted to drive after a few drinks.

IAM Director of Policy and Research, Neil Greig, said: "The vast majority of drivers believe drinking and driving is socially unacceptable and potentially lethal. But in the run-up to Christmas, daily routines change, sometimes unexpectedly. Extra social occasions with friends, family and colleagues can place those who would not normally drink and drive in tricky situations, such as what to do after the office Christmas party. But it is crucial to decide firmly at the outset either not to drink or to leave the car where it is – even if that is the train station car park.

"The wrong decision will bring instant justice, as the police can haul you into court the next day for a fine and a year's driving ban and, if you cause a fatal or serious accident, a prison sentence of up to 14 years can apply. Then there are the less formal penalties, such as the inconvenience of being car-less, the possibility of losing your job and the social stigma of a criminal record. When you eventually get back behind the wheel, you will face years of sky-high insurance costs."

Remember:

- Even one drink can reduce your determination not to drive at parties, drinks measures will be more generous than those served in pubs
- You face being breathalysed if you are involved in a road accident - even if it is not your fault
- Drinking heavily the night before can put you over the legal limit the morning after
- As you make your way home without the car, remember that a high proportion of road accidents involve pedestrians who have been drinking. Don't attempt to walk home drunk along rural roads or attempt to cross busy roads you only know as a driver
- If you are driving, don't drink; and always refuse a lift from someone you know has been drinking

Young male drivers "most likely to be uninsured and unlicensed" says report. 12 November 2008

Potentially lethal unlicensed drivers tend to be younger and male, driving up to a staggering 3.7 million hours a month according to a report published this week in the latest edition of Advanced Driving, the IAM members' magazine.

Neil Greig, IAM Motoring Trust Director, said that a new ten point plan is needed to prepare young people to drive safely on their own or with passengers after their test.

"We don't want to demonise young drivers, but research shows that uninsured drivers are typically young males living in urban areas – 60 per cent of those convicted of uninsured driving are under 25, and half are under 20," said Mr Greig, writing in the newly revamped IAM magazine.

"These drivers have a high risk of crashing and there is a perception among their peers that they can 'get away with it'. Young people must be convinced that the only way to drive is fully licensed and insured. The majority of safe younger drivers should have their efforts supported. They should know that the police and justice system targets the reckless minority that break the law," said Mr Greig.

Mr Greig said that identifying the reckless young driver is key – there should be a better system to require them to go on a rectification course even for minor offences.

"Despite successes in reducing the number of deaths and injuries on Britain's roads, younger drivers are not getting any safer," said Mr Greig.

The report Young Drivers: Where and when they are unsafe says that the combined effects of age and driving experience result in fewer crashes.

"We know novice drivers, particularly those under 20, are most at risk in the early weeks after they pass their driving test," said Mr Greig.

The IAM propose a ten point plan for young drivers which will improve road safety for road users of all ages.

1. Understanding the greatest risk
2. Focus on rural roads
3. Start at school
4. Parental involvement
5. Low premiums for low risk learners
6. Identify the reckless
7. Target police enforcement
8. Continual improvement
9. Make roads safer
10. Incentivise driver aids

You can't argue with physics says IAM in seatbelt warning. 3 November 2008

The IAM welcomes the new hard hitting government advert aimed at raising awareness of exactly why we have seatbelts in all our cars. The scientific approach to the aftermath of a crash means no one can avoid asking themselves why they don't take that few seconds required to protect themselves.

Neil Greig, Director of Policy and Research at the IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) said: "When you wear a seatbelt you 'switch on' three decades of engineering research and allow your car to give you the full protection it was designed to deliver. It is probably the single most important safety feature in a modern car."

Statistics show that young people are much more likely to be involved in crashes where no seatbelt was being worn. This leads to a terrible toll of unnecessary death, injury and lifelong dependence, adds Greig.

Seat belt wearing rates are lower among young drivers than older drivers, lower among young male than female drivers, and lower at night than during the day

- 23 per cent of male drivers under 20 killed or seriously injured in a day-time crash were not wearing a seat-belt, compared with 26 per cent killed at night
- 16 per cent of female drivers aged 17-25 killed in crashes in day-time were not wearing a seat-belt, as were 11 per cent of those killed at night.

"Joined up" action needed to cut road deaths says IAM. 28 October 2008

A hard-hitting report from the House of Commons Transport Select Committee today sets road safety aspirations that will demand strong integrated leadership from the Department for Transport (DfT) and the Home Office, said the IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists).

The IAM – the UK's leading independent road safety charity - said that the TSC identifies the need to focus on the known high priority areas to produce real progress in road safety over the next two decades.

The report highlights areas on which the IAM has long campaigned. These include action on:

- deaths on rural roads
- the appalling toll of death and injury among young male drivers
- better training for fleet drivers
- further driver, rider and cycle training.

Neil Greig, Director of IAM Policy and Research, said: "The Committee has been courageous in pointing out where the UK is failing on road safety. Sustaining success in reducing casualties requires 'joined up' action and consistent funding by key government departments. Critically, we must focus on where the biggest reductions in death and injury can be achieved by implementing improvements in infrastructure that deliver sustainable accident reductions."

"Planning to reduce deaths and injury requires a clear vision and reliable data. On both counts the Committee shows that much needs to be done to involve the general population in target setting and to

highlight the complex human failings that lead to crashes.

“Simplistic solutions based on the assumption that speeding causes most crashes have skewed policy for years and may have led to an over reliance on safety cameras, and on penalties rather than deterrence. The proposed British Road Safety Survey, Road Safety Commission and road crash investigation body must help to harness the appropriate resources and focus effort where they will be most effective. Consistent enforcement and a long-term commitment to improve driving and motorcycling skills must underpin the government’s next road safety targets,” added Mr Greig.

IAM Website News Room

About Us

How can the Group help me?

The Group offers observed runs to Associates on a one-to-one basis in their own cars. Your driving skills and attitude to all aspects of motoring and road use will be closely monitored by an Observer (a full Group member who has already passed the advanced driving test). Your Observer (who is a volunteer) will give you practical guidance, constructive advice, and support to help you to pass the advanced test.

How much does it cost?

The Skill for Life package which includes Associate Group Membership, the IAM Book “Pass Your Advanced Driving Test”, the Advanced Test and the first year’s membership of the IAM when you pass, costs just £99. As an Associate member, you will benefit from the Group’s activities and have as many observed runs as you need to attain the IAM Test standard, (there is no additional charge for the observed runs). Associate membership is given on the understanding that you will apply for the advanced test within the first 12 months after joining the Group.

How does the Group Operate?

The dates, times, and meeting places for your observed runs are arranged directly with your Observer. The Group itself meets socially at 7:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month at the Littlebourne War Memorial Hall, (4 miles east of Canterbury on the A257), OS Grid Reference TR208575.

How do I join the Group?

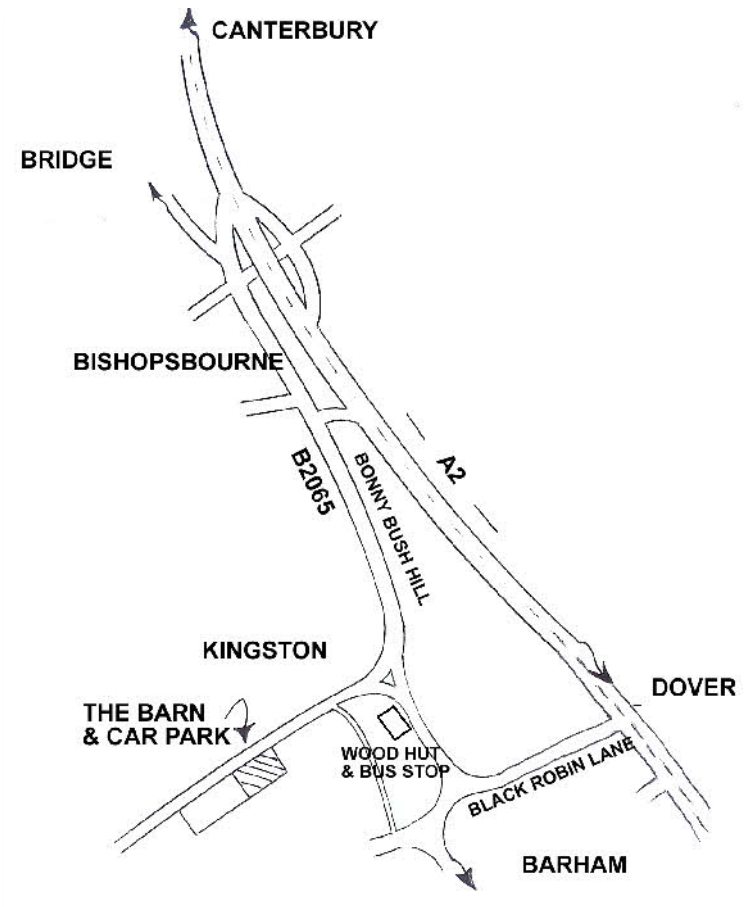
If you contact Mrs Vanessa Norley, 01304 215168, she will be able to give you full details, or visit our website at: <http://www.eastkentiam.org.uk>

The sessions are run the first Sunday of every month, from 10 am – 12 noon.

PLEASE NOTE: There is no session in January.

To find 'The Barn', Kingston:

- Leave the A2 – Canterbury to Dover Road – at the junction signposted "Bishopsbourne Kingston and Barham".
- Take the B2065 signposted "Kingston, Barham and Elham".
- At the bottom of "Bonny Bush Hill" turn right by the bus shelter into "The Street".
- Pass "Church Lane" on the left and The Barn and adjoining car park are within 200m on the left.



New Associates since the last update

Stephen Hyde
 Angel Johnston
 John Maxted
 Tessa Allen
 Beryl Hinton-Jones
 Matthew Lippiat
 Lyndon Brand
 Nicholas Ciccone

New Members

Adrian Friend
 Francis Dunn
 Malcolm Goldsack

Events Data

Littlebourne War Memorial Hall
 - Second Thursday - 19.30pm

11th December - John Pearce - Retired Senior Detective with Kent Police - 'Murder comes Gift Wrapped' - a story from John's personal experiences.

8th January 2009 - Alan Hollands - various DVDs

12th February - Professor Cyril Isenberg - The Magic of Bubbles

Test Passes**Period:**

16.05.08 - 11.07.08

Associate	Date	Observer
Dale Goodrum	16.05.2008	Richard Blackford
Robert Kennedy	16.05.2008	Ted Willey
Stuart Thompson	01.07.2008	Nick Williams
George Bird	05.07.2008	Nick Williams
John Miller	07.07.2008	Richard Hazell
Victor Johnson	11.07.2008	Richard Hazell
Stephen Green	11.07.2008	Ron Sims

If you haven't been mentioned in the Test Passes and you think you should be, please contact Elizabeth. Thank you.

Final Copy Date for March Submission - 12 February 2009

Any views contained within this publication are not necessarily the views of the Editor, EKG or the IAM.
 The Editor claims no liability for correctness of information, printing or typesetting errors.