

EAST KENT GROUP

Newsletter December 2009

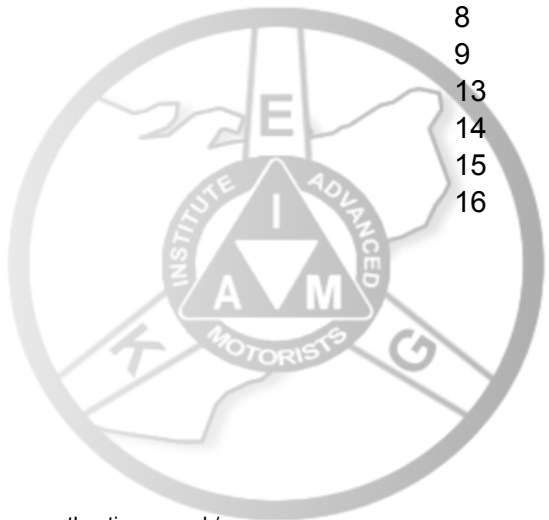
IAM

DRIVING ROAD SAFETY



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| Richard Meadows | PUBLICITY (ex-officio) | |
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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.

It's been another eventful year, that seems to have raced by at the rate of knots. We successfully completed our Land's End to John O'Groats, and raised our best ever amount of £1061. Mini Jock is now in for some serious TLC work - since he seems to be under the impression that his time off should be used imitating Swiss cheese.

This means another winter on motorbike, which doesn't actually bother me as much as it might have in the past. I think riding in winter conditions can only improve my riding skills, as greater concentration and observation is required, along with more patience and less inclination to throw the bike around in the care free abandon employed in the drier climes. The addition of heated handlebar grips is also a huge benefit, and on a recent tiny little Mini convoy we took around Planet Thanet, my hands were actually warmer on arrival at Minnis Bay than Mum's were in the Bini! Nuff said!

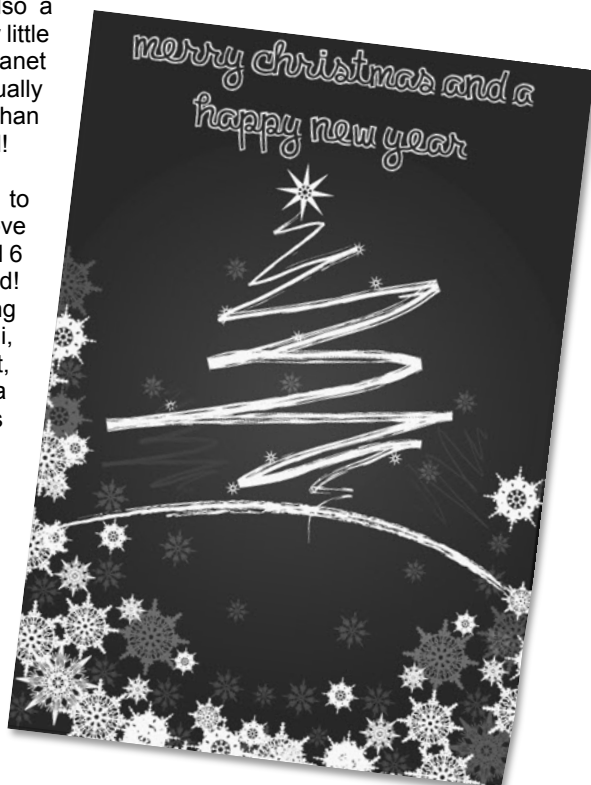
We're now on the count down to Christmas, and I'm sure it will prove entertaining with a 2 year old and 6 year old hyped up and going mad! Luke, (the 6 year old), is expecting Santa to bring him a Nintendo Wii, and so, not wanting to disappoint, Santa may well have such a device in his sack. Which means that my sister and I will probably be no better behaved than the aforementioned 2 and 6 year old!! But it will be all my sister's fault. And the two year old will want to play with his cars right in front of the TV, which is the only place to play with them of course...

The only thing that will occur, without fail, is mayhem, screaming, shouting, stropky fits and laughter. I can't wait.

Here's hoping you all have a likewise entertaining Christmas break!

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



We all learn from our mistakes. Ask most people if they agree, and I suspect, the answer will probably be yes. It appears that for some, one mistake is enough, perhaps at one extreme because its effects are so severe and extensive and life-changing, or at the other, because they are so analytical and calculating that they take even a minor and supposedly inconsequential error on board and learn from it. I seem to bumble along somewhere in the middle, making similar inconvenient mistakes a few times before the penny drops, whereupon I claim to all and sundry that I have never made that particular error before, and can thus be excused for not having seen it coming. But some keep making the same mistake time and time again before they finally twig (how many times has Elizabeth Taylor been married?). Indeed, I have heard tell that there is a certain medical condition in which you do not learn from your mistakes, however many times they are repeated (how many times has Elizabeth Taylor been married?).

So where does this leave my friend Mr. Blobby? You will realise, of course, that Mr. Blobby is not his real name, but I will confirm that his is my friend. It is best that I do not reveal his true identity. I have known Mr. B a long time, back to the time of the last Cortinas and Renault 16's, or thereabouts. Mr. B is reasonably sensible, likeable, hardworking, humorous and reliable, and probably several more fairly positive adjectives as well. You can have a sensible discussion with him about most things.

He did a potentially life-changing thing the other week. He crashed his car. He's not a bad driver, reasonably observant, safe, relaxed and mainly law-abiding, but so far resisting all hints, subtle and otherwise, to consider the IAM. The car was newish,

three years old, just had its first MOT. He liked it, and cleaned and polished it as you do. He has written it off. Luckily, it was a single-vehicle crash, and there were no passengers in the car. So, no others injured then. He did bash his head, but not too badly. Could so easily have been worse. Could have killed himself, and others. This he realises. Maintains it was "bad luck, the luck of the draw". He lives out in the country, in a little village with no public transport, which has lost its shop, school and pub. Drives to work, in various places around the county. Rather inconvenient, and bad timing, just before Christmas. Never mind, he'll learn from his mistake, and be more careful next time. Except the next time is far away. How far away? Drunk driving, heavy fine, losing licence. That far away. He will learn from his mistake, I tell myself. Stop and weigh up the expense, inconvenience, potential loss of income, and loss of face. Apply the same common sense to this as the rest of his life.

But somehow, I don't think so. He didn't last time. To my knowledge, this is the second time he's been done. I think it was "bad luck" last time as well. Maybe he has that medical condition. Or maybe he's Elizabeth Taylor.

Drive safely this Christmas and New Year. And watch out for Mr Blobbies!

Chairman's Report 2009

This is my report on the East Kent Group for the past year. I have tried to keep it mercifully brief.

On the social side, we continue to meet here at Littlebourne once a month, and as always, we have speakers on numerous subjects. This often has a car or motoring or IAM theme, such as Ben Crosswell, on

what he looks for in the IAM test, Dr Joe Rumble on the somewhat surreal mix of the 57 cars he has owned, and his various medical postings around the country, or member Steve Hyde on Building the Channel Tunnel Terminal Bridges. Another member, another Steve, Steve Green, entertained us, if that is the right word, with his talk on his other life as a Paramedic. We have gone off on a tangent with John Pearce on "Murder Comes Gift-Wrapped", and who can forget Professor Cyril Isenberg with The Magic of Bubbles? The weather for the Manoeuvring Evening in June was just about kind enough, and we had a good turnout for our display of members talents, or otherwise, for the John Smith Trophy, which I unaccountably failed to win.

The Chairman is responsible for the conduct of the Committee, but is the Committee which runs the Group, and I thank them all for their diligence. Neil Oliver, Treasurer, Jane Clarke, who is now Membership Secretary as well as Drive-in Coordinator, Alan Hollands, Chief Observer, Elizabeth Cooper, Associate Coordinator, and other committee members Ian Martin, Peter Denham and Keith Watson make the decisions which keep the group running as it should. Thanks are also due to Michelle Stone for the newsletter and website and Richard Meadows for occasional guest appearances as our publicity officer.

I must thank Vanessa for her work as Secretary. As you may be aware, other commitments mean she is unable to continue as secretary, although she is not leaving us entirely. We hope. Many thanks Vanessa, for much industrious work, and hiding your light under a Bushel.

It is important not to forget the Observers, and their work for the IAM and the Group. We operate a one-to-one system pairing up observers and associates, and this allows observers a fair degree of freedom to organise themselves and their associate as they wish. This they do with generally not too much fuss, and keep a fairly low profile. I know many prefer it that way. I must place on record my thanks to them, as they are at the sharp end, getting people up to and through the test. I must also thank those committee members and observers who attend the monthly drive-in, and help to ensure its continuing success.

While this has perhaps not been as busy a year as some others, I hope the green shoots of recovery will mean a rather more active year is to come. Thank you.

Nigel

Chief Observer's Report AGM October 2009

Associates

As the Associates Co-ordinator has stated, from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009, we had 28 passes which is up on the previous year. From 1 April 2009 to date, we have had 15 passes and we have Associates waiting for test dates.

In the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009 we carried out 5 Drive Checks and a further 2 for the current period.

Observers

We have 27 Observers comprising 7 Senior, 12 Qualified and 8 Trainees, all Trainees have successfully completed the written part of their qualification test.

For the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009, the average number of Observed runs was 9.18 with an average of 13.87 hours. Each run therefore being slightly over 1.5 hours. As a general rule I would ask Observers to make the run of a 2 hour duration. This allows much ground to be covered in both the literal and figurative senses and has the additional benefit of building the Associates ability to concentrate for a sustained period.

Training

We have held one Observer Training Course this year for 6 Trainees, the next course will be April/May 2010.

An Observer's day in June, the first such day we have held, was attended by approximately half of our Observers.

Chris Gilbert has agreed to spend a day with us at Kingston next year to give guidance to members from his vast experience.

Drive In

The Drive In has seen little change in the numbers attending. An average of 10 people, of whom 5 are Observers, producing 4 drives. Jane would like to thank those who regularly attend.

Jane would be very pleased to see more Observers and Members on the first Sunday of each month at Kingston, except January.

Finally, congratulations to Stephen Green on passing the Senior Observer Test.

Thank you to Elizabeth for keeping track of all the Associates and Observers. To Jane for running the Drive In. To Vanessa, Nigel

and Ted Willey for their help with the Observer Training Course and a special thank you to Vanessa whose administrative skills know no bounds. A heartfelt thank you Vanessa.

Alan

Associate Co-ordinators Report 2009

As of 30/09/09, we have 24 Active associates and 2 current Non-active associates. 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 2008 to 31 March 2009 we achieved 28 passes, which is up on the previous year. For the period from 1 April 2009 to date, we have had 15 passes and we have associates waiting for test dates.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Observers, especially Alan Hollands, 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 |
| 01/04/08 – 31/03/09 | 28 passes |
| 01/04/07 – 30/09/07 | 9 passes |
| 01/04/08 – 30/09/08 | 15 passes |
| 01/04/09 – 30/09/09 | 15 passes |

Elizabeth

Income and Expenditure Account for Year Ended 31 May 2009

Neil

**EAST KENT GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS (Registered Charity No. 1049659)
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2009**

| Income | 2009 | | 2008 | |
|--|----------|-----------------|----------|-----------------|
| | £ | p | £ | p |
| Subscriptions: | | | | |
| Group Full Members | 1,380.00 | | 1,410.00 | |
| Group Associate Members | 1,154.00 | | 1,125.00 | |
| Group Friends | 6.00 | 2,540.00 | 6.00 | 2,541.00 |
| Profit on Raffles & Socials | | 95.53 | | 88.94 |
| Sales from Group Shop | | 94.50 | | 157.49 |
| Outside Events | | 0.00 | | 47.15 |
| Drive Check | | 20.00 | | 70.00 |
| Donations | | 120.00 | | 5.00 |
| Gift Aid | | 294.09 | | 412.87 |
| Bank Interest | | 361.15 | | 522.38 |
| Total Income | | <u>3,545.27</u> | | <u>3,846.63</u> |
| Expenses | | | | |
| Postage | | 414.07 | | 384.88 |
| Newsletter Production | | 387.45 | | 397.60 |
| Stationery | | 222.34 | | 237.95 |
| Room Hire | | 306.00 | | 288.00 |
| Group Insurance | | 52.50 | | 52.50 |
| Associate and Observer Training Expenses | | 996.58 | | 1,010.28 |
| Speakers' Expenses | | 162.47 | | 149.00 |
| Equipment Depreciation | | 363.50 | | 572.71 |
| Group Shop Cost of Sales | | 64.54 | | 126.09 |
| Stocks Written Off | | 24.00 | | 116.91 |
| Sundry Expenses | | 444.70 | | 172.61 |
| Total Expenses | | <u>3,438.75</u> | | <u>3,506.53</u> |
| Surplus for Year | | <u>106.52</u> | | <u>341.10</u> |

**BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 MAY 2009**

| | 2009 | | 2008 | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | £ | p | £ | p |
| Fixed Assets | | | | |
| Equipment (At Cost) | 1,900.80 | | 1,998.37 | |
| Accumulated Depreciation | (1,838.54) | 62.06 | (1,571.41) | 425.56 |
| Current Assets | | | | |
| Stocks | 512.71 | | 298.15 | |
| Prepayments and Accrued Income | 521.76 | | 144.15 | |
| Deposit Account | 10,066.20 | | 9,333.33 | |
| Current Account: | 160.25 | | 587.77 | |
| | <u>11,260.92</u> | | <u>10,361.00</u> | |
| Current Liabilities | | | | |
| Sundry Creditors | 473.55 | | 43.35 | |
| | <u>473.55</u> | | <u>43.35</u> | |
| Net Current Assets | | 10,787.37 | | 10,317.36 |
| Net Assets | | <u>10,849.43</u> | | <u>10,742.91</u> |
| Capital Account | | | | |
| Opening Balance | | 10,742.91 | | 10,401.81 |
| Surplus for Year | | 106.52 | | 341.10 |
| Closing Balance | | <u>10,849.43</u> | | <u>10,742.91</u> |

I wish I knew where 2009 had gone! It seems to have flown by and here we are preparing for Christmas. As I type this, it's raining cats and dogs with a strong wind howling around too – roll on Spring! However, we've got our Christmas Social to look forward to with Professor Isenberg giving us a 'Journey through the Solar System', I gather he will take about an hour or two to set up before the meeting, remembering all his kit when he gave us the Bubbles talk, I think we will be in for another interesting and enlightening evening. The list of forthcoming Speakers is further on in this Newsletter and we have a lot to look forward to. I must say I've enjoyed all of our Social evenings throughout 2009, I hope you have too.

I'm still hoping there is someone out there eager to take on the duties of Group Secretary. Due to a change in personal circumstances, I will be unable to undertake all of the duties in future. It is the day to day responsibilities that need overseeing and I would be delighted to discuss these with anyone who feels they would be able to take them on. If you are interested, please either email me secekgiam@hotmail.com or telephone 01304 215168.

All that's left for me to say is I hope you all have an enjoyable Christmas and a very Happy New Year – see you in 2010.

Vanessa



Driving = Fun

I have been involved in various discussions at Sunday drive ins and the observers day earlier in the year about activities that we as a car club could take to help members get to know each other better and to promote our enjoyment of driving. I wonder if any club members would be interested in taking part in any other events with a motoring theme, probably at a weekend if I could (help) arrange it. The first step in organising any event would be to gauge interest. Therefore I have a couple of ideas that could be of interest to you maybe for 2010. If so please let me know.

Firstly, Go Carting. There are 3 circuits here in Kent who offer novices and experts alike the chance to race around a track just inches from the tarmac. I have tried it on a few occasions and found it to be great fun. The carts generally are easy to drive, the circuits include safety equipment and full facilities and there are various types of event available depending on numbers from either just driving around the circuit at your own speed to full on timed races. I have had a look at their websites and the cost to experience Carting seems to work out at about £50 per person for 2 to 3 hours at the venue (including heats, practice, safety briefings etc).

Secondly, Mercedes World. Mercedes UK have taken over a large part of what used to be Brooklands Airfield and Race Circuit in Surrey (Just off the M25 near Weybridge). They have a museum, cinema, shop, restaurant and lots of Mercedes cars, some of which you can test drive (at a price). I haven't been there yet, but have spoken to someone who did recently visit who thought it was good but that a visit to the Brooklands museum at the same time would make the day more

worthwhile. The Brooklands museum has lots of planes including a Concorde and Cars and Bikes from Brooklands racing days.

In order to gauge interest in the first instance if you are interested in these or have any other ideas that you think might be of interest please contact me and I'll start a list with a view to maybe organising something in the Spring. Please either email me on trevor.cobb20@ntlworld.com or call me on 01303 226333 (before 7.30 pm please).

Trevor Cobb

A Day in the life of...

Here I am 9:58am sitting, waiting in the car park of the service area. The associate is cutting it fine. Ah well, that means I can watch them park! Here we go; this must be it, yes, correct registration number, good bit of reversing there, neatly into the space. I'll walk across and introduce myself.

Well, this is a very clean car, clearly looked after and in good condition. Lots of tread on the tyres, screens and windows sparkling. Ooh, look at the interior, tidy, clear surfaces and no clutter, impressive start!

Get the paperwork done first and then have a chat with the associate. Oh look, 3 points on the driving licence, 18 months ago convicted for speeding in a 30 mph limit. Something to look out for, maybe that's what prompted the Skill for Life package? Test certificate and insurance both valid, quick eyesight check... just to make sure!

Now to let the associate know what I'm expecting - keep it short as I'm sure they just want to get going.

"I'm looking for a safe, smooth and systematic drive with plenty of safe progress where possible. I am expecting you to achieve speed limits but not exceed them. You must not not break any road traffic law." Sounds easy doesn't it!

Finally, at the end of the briefing, "I would like to hear a commentary by you. Some associates like to give a commentary for the duration of the drive; others prefer me to choose a point through the drive for 5 minutes commentary. Which suits you better?"

The associate's given me a quick cockpit drill, (a good idea to focus the mind), but decided against moving brake test and given me reasons why. Right, let's get out of the car park and enjoy the drive!

One hour later...

"...if you'd like to reverse into that space next to the BMW and switch off the engine, thank you." Well, plenty of safe progress; couldn't have called that a Sunday afternoon drive in the country! Kept to all the speed limits, especially the tricky 30mph coming down the steep hill and the long stretch of 30mph limit without the repeater signs in the village. Mainly systematic but with several brake/gear overlaps, notably on that left turn when planning was left too late and we ended up braking, changing gear and steering all at the same time, very messy.

What a cracking drive over the forest though. The associate has clearly got the hang of the Limit Point, bend assessment and cornering technique, although we could have a chosen a more appropriate gear for our speed on the left hander under the bridge, a bit of wallow and unbalanced around there. Lovely positioning on the right hand bends, tucked over to the

nearside, watching out for the nearside dangers; leaves, potholes mud, broken carriageway.

I was disappointed with the town drive. Poor observation, not using reflections in windows or anticipating traffic light changes and why didn't we see that cyclist! Definitely needs to scan, raise vision and check mirrors.

The associate was getting tired in the final 15 minutes of the drive making silly errors of judgement, but as I chose this point for a commentary we got back on track and concentrated.

Here we go then, "On the drive you have given today..."

You decide, have they reached the required standard?

Article reproduced from Guildford Newsletter by kind permission of Amanda Smith - IAM Staff Examiner

On the job

An elderly lady took her car to the garage for a service and requested that the wheels be moved around. The mechanic asked if she wanted the front wheels swapped to the rear and vice versa.

"No," replied the lady. "Ah, so you want them swapped diagonally?"

"No, not that either," was the response.

"What exactly do you want me to move around then?" asked the exasperated mechanic.

"The wheels! Every time I go to check the air in my tyres, the valves are in the wrong

place – I want you to move the wheels so that when I park all the valves are at the bottom!"

Submitted by Han from "Matters of Testing" newsletter for MoT testers

Bad driving may have genetic basis, UCI study finds

People with gene variant perform more than 20 percent worse on driving test

Bad drivers may in part have their genes to blame, suggests a new study by UC Irvine neuroscientists.

People with a particular gene variant performed more than 20 percent worse on a driving test than people without it - and a follow-up test a few days later yielded similar results. About 30 percent of Americans have the variant.

"These people make more errors from the get-go, and they forget more of what they learned after time away," says Dr. Steven Cramer, neurology associate professor and senior author of the study published recently in the journal *Cerebral Cortex*.

This gene variant limits the availability of a protein called brain-derived neurotrophic factor during activity. BDNF keeps memory strong by supporting communication among brain cells and keeping them functioning optimally. When a person is engaged in a particular task, BDNF is secreted in the brain area connected with that activity to help the body respond.

Previous studies have shown that in people with the variant, a smaller portion of the brain is stimulated when doing a task than in those with a normal BDNF gene. People with the variant also don't recover as well

after a stroke. Given these differences, the UCI scientists wondered: Could the variant affect an activity such as driving?

"We wanted to study motor behavior, something more complex than finger-tapping," says Stephanie McHughen, graduate student and lead author of the study. "Driving seemed like a good choice because it has a learning curve and it's something most people know how to do."

The driving test was taken by 29 people - 22 without the gene variant and seven with it. They were asked to drive 15 laps on a simulator that required them to learn the nuances of a track programmed to have difficult curves and turns. Researchers recorded how well they stayed on the course over time. Four days later, the test was repeated.

Results showed that people with the variant did worse on both tests than the other participants, and they remembered less the second time. "Behavior derives from dozens and dozens of neurophysiologic events, so it's somewhat surprising this exercise bore fruit," Cramer says.

The gene variant isn't always bad, though. Studies have found that people with it maintain their usual mental sharpness longer than those without it when neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's, Huntington's and multiple sclerosis are present.

"It's as if nature is trying to determine the best approach," Cramer says. "If you want to learn a new skill or have had a stroke and need to regenerate brain cells, there's evidence that having the variant is not good. But if you've got a disease that affects cognitive function, there's evidence it can act in your favor. The variant brings a

different balance between flexibility and stability."

A test to determine whether someone has the gene variant is not commercially available.

"I'd be curious to know the genetics of people who get into car crashes," Cramer says. "I wonder if the accident rate is higher for drivers with the variant."

In addition to Cramer and McHughen, Paul Rodriguez, Laura Marchal-Crespo and Vincent Procaccio of UCI worked on the study, along with researchers from the University of Florida. The National Institutes of Health funded the study.

Jennifer Fitzenberger, University Communications

(University of California website: http://www.uci.edu/features/feature_bdnfdri ving_091028.php)

A Physicist Writes...

If I glance back at my 'writings' so far (all 72 of them), several themes emerge. The main one, I hope, is that physics can illuminate the world of motoring and help us to drive more knowledgably, and possibly more safely. At first I thought I would soon run out of topics to discuss — how wrong I was!

Let me start another one. Many objects (solid or otherwise) have their own natural frequency of oscillation or resonance. Think of a stretched string or similar: you can pluck it to make it sound a note, but more interestingly it will resonate on its own (ie, unplucked) to something nearby that's vibrating at that same rate. Or indeed it can pick up any one of a whole series of frequencies: twice its natural one, or three

times, and so on. (It can even oscillate at several of these frequencies at once, but let's not get too involved.)

Tension doesn't necessarily have to be applied. On a ship once, I noticed a long thin chain hanging across a gangway. The vibration from the engine down below was shaking it with an oscillation split into thirteen sections (looking like <><><><> but with curves), showing that the engine speed happened to be exactly 13 times the natural frequency of the loose chain. A magical sight, to a physicist!

Or imagine a panel (can you guess where I'm leading?), fixed around its edge but free to move in the middle. This too will resonate to various external frequencies. So it's no surprise, really, that the engine of a car can induce anything slightly loose on the vehicle to vibrate, when the frequency is right.

It occurred to me to ask a person in the know if manufacturers have to go to some trouble muffling the resonances in any new model. Indeed they do, I was told — and probably just as much effort is needed to kill the squeaks and rattles too (not always with 100% success, I'd say...).

Physics isn't the only science capable of illuminating motoring, I must admit. I've mentioned before that one model of car looks much like another these days. This is surely analogous to convergent evolution in biology: different species acquiring similar features in response to facing the same conditions and needing to adapt to them!

Another theme I have explored over the years is that of the eye and the brain and optical illusions. I've learnt quite a bit while writing about such things. I was familiar with many illusions before, but less so with

what caused them — nor did I quite realize how relevant this topic is to driving: the fact is, not only may you fail to take in much of what should be visible on the road ahead of you, but some of what you think you see is pure imagination.

I feel that every driver should be aware of the dangers that can arise from this. The more you focus on an approaching hazard, for example, the more likely it is that you will overlook something else important at a different distance or in another direction. Or rather, your eyes may see it but your brain won't tell you about it. So: keep your attention moving around.

As for more general aspects of driving, I hesitate (a little) to lecture on them unless I can apply some scientific thinking. A while ago I unearthed two big numbers, from different sources: in 2005 the total annual distance driven in Great Britain was 300 billion miles, while nearly 500,000 vehicles met with accidents. Dividing one number by the other tells us that the average driver has just one accident in more than 600,000 miles.

No wonder people think they are safe at the wheel! They don't realize that combining this tiny chance of trouble with the large potential consequences of an accident actually puts themselves (and others) at serious risk.

And so we get drivers doing such plainly dangerous things as adjusting a sat-nav while on the move (this is now, apparently, a bigger cause of accidents than using a mobile phone), or controlling the wheel with just the palm of a hand — though I guess in the latter case their 'defence' might be that at least they can always steer instantly in either direction in an emergency, unlike people who are in the habit of cornering

with one hand gripping the opposite side of the wheel.

Still glancing back at my output: I seem to have an obsession with malfunctioning signs and other road furniture! In West Sussex, certainly, I get the impression that about half the road signs there are facing at either 90° or 180° to the proper direction (or perhaps it's mostly only these errant signs that catch my eye...). But how much notice does the county council take of my reports? Rarely any at all.

By contrast, Surrey CC nearly always reacts. Earlier this year I was on the A317 from Weybridge to Junction 11 of the M25. Approaching a roundabout sign, I thought I saw the A31 indicated: pure imagination, surely — doesn't the A31 run west from Guildford? Back home, I retraced my journey on the internet in Google Street View, and there was the sign, clearly showing A31! The explanation was a missing 7, of course. The council was grateful to be informed of this, advising me it would reinstate the digit as soon as the budget permitted. And now it has done so, I've noticed. I would quite like to have been passing at the time.

I mentioned scientific thinking above, but some of the ideas I've put into these columns I can't quite imagine coming from anyone else whether a scientist or not. Here's another such thought to end with: last month we stayed in a village in the S of France that had been hit not long before by a storm of golf-ball-sized hailstones. Roofs had been destroyed and crops flattened. Cars were covered in dimples as if they were, well, golf balls. But was there a little good news in this too, I wondered: might the air drag of the vehicles now be less (as with golf balls) and hence their fuel efficiency improved?

*Peter Soul, Thames Valley Group of
Advanced Motorists - October 2009*

Car-park amnesty could save lives this Christmas

3 December 2009

With the party season fully underway Britain's largest independent road charity the IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) today called for a seasonal amnesty on penalties for cars left in station car parks overnight, to dissuade commuters from chancing the drive home from the train after post-work drinks.

Many stations enforce parking penalties for cars that are left overnight.

Kevin Delaney, IAM Head of Road Safety, said: "Drivers can be more tempted to drink over the Christmas period than at any other time of year, and reassuring commuters that their car will not be clamped or fined when they retrieve it the next morning will help avoid risk-taking behaviour.

"An amnesty will allow commuters a chance to get to the station and pay for the next day's parking before getting a fine. Transport bosses should make it easier to leave the car alone if you have had a drink."

Mr Delaney added: "It is still important to remember that you may still be over the limit if you're planning to pick your car up from the station the next day. If you still feel ill or have had a large amount to drink the night before you shouldn't risk drink driving."

IAM Website

Can you Name any Reindeer Facts?

Reindeer are one of several subspecies of caribou found around the world.

Reindeer are herbivores, which means they eat vegetation. In the summer, they eat leaves and herbs. In the winter, they eat lichen and moss.

Reindeer generally don't run very fast. In fact, a white-tailed deer could outrun a reindeer.

Reindeer use their antlers like a shovel to break through the crust of snow to reach the vegetation underneath.

Reindeer are various colours, including white, dark grey, and brown. Males can have light-coloured manes, necks, and shoulders.

The only female deer to grow antlers are reindeer. Each summer, both males and females grow their wonderful racks, but males usually shed theirs in late November to mid-December. Females keep their antlers until spring. Because all of Santa's reindeer are depicted with antlers, one might conclude that every one of them, including Rudolph, is female.

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 £139. 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?

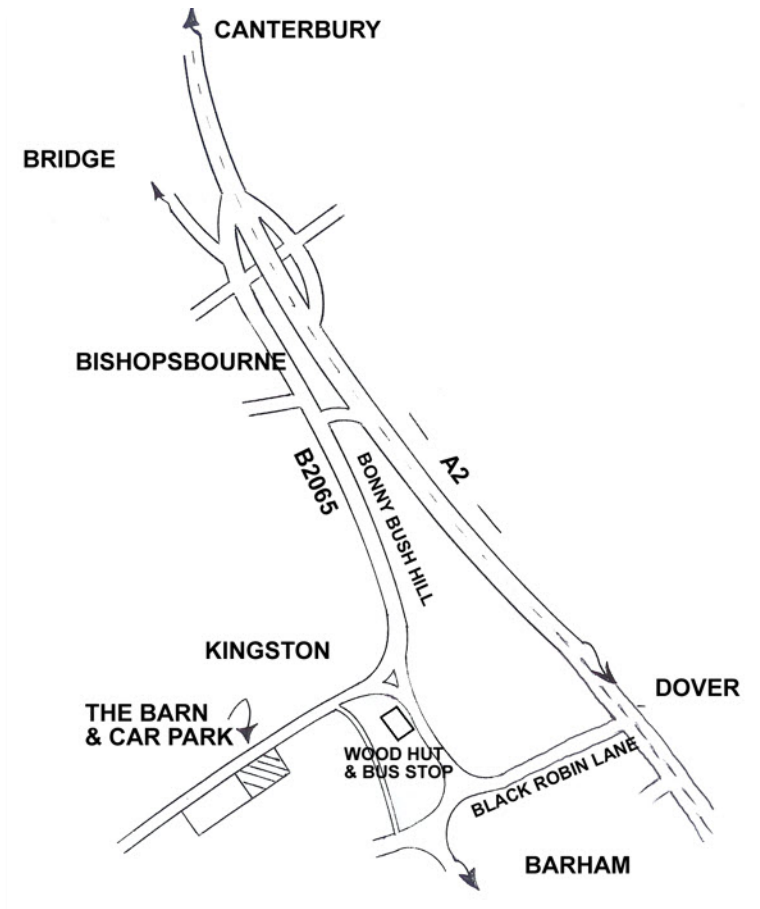
If you contact Mrs Vanessa Norley, 01304 215168, she will be able to give you full details, or visit our website at: <http://www.eastkentiam.org.uk>

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

Derek Clark
 Mark Ashman
 Michael Grant
 Gillian Spong
 Hazel Lawrence

Events Data**Littlebourne War Memorial Hall**

- Second Thursday - 19.30pm

10th December - Professor Cyril Isenberg
 – A Journey through the Solar System

14th January 2010 - Graham Galvin – IAM
 Test Examiner (on Test Matters)

11th February - Vic's Quiz Evening

11th March - John Pearce, Retired
 Detective (Subject TBA)

8th April - Terry Friday – IAM Test
 Examiner

13th May - Graham Galvin on Police
 Matters

10th June

- Annual Manoeuvring Evening at Hersden

Test Passes**Period:**

20.08.09 - 11.11.09

| Associate | Date | Observer |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Michael Stace | 20.08.2009 | Ted Willey |
| Graham Joiner | 28.08.2009 | Trevor Cobb |
| Christopher Blackburn | 29.08.2009 | Angela Payne |
| Stephanie Evans | 18.09.2009 | Eric Gowler |
| Roger Pitt | 23.09.2009 | Alan Norman |
| John Mercer | 09.10.2009 | Nigel Holden |
| Dennis Townsend | 16.10.2009 | Donald Parish |
| Paul Beechey | 20.10.2009 | Ted Willey |
| Stephen Miller | 02.11.2009 | Alan Hollands |
| Colin Clive | 02.11.2009 | Vanessa Norley |
| Edward England | 07.11.2009 | Stephen Green |
| Neil Obbard | 09.11.2009 | Richard Hazell |
| John Maxted | 11.11.2009 | David Beswick |

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 - 11 February 2010

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 The Editor claims no liability for correctness of information, printing or typesetting errors.