

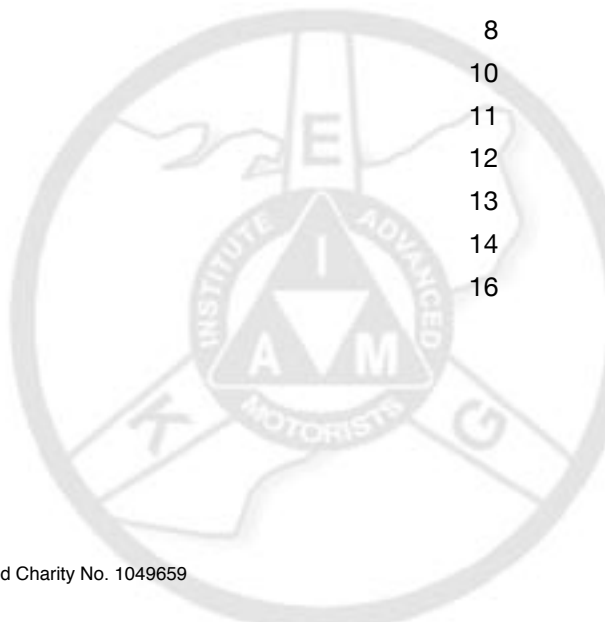
EAST KENT GROUP

Newsletter June 2003



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Executive Officers

Chairman	Nigel Cooke 55, Leyburne Road, Dover, Kent. CT16 1SL	01304 215891
Secretary	Sheila Redwood 7, St. Stephens Hill, Canterbury. CT2 7AT secekgiam@hotmail.com	01227 462676
Treasurer	Neil Oliver 22, Cornwall Road, Herne Bay. CT6 7SY	01227 369138
Membership Secretary	Carol Stone 34, Park Road, Ramsgate, Kent. CT11 7QW ekg.membersecretary@tiscali.co.uk	01843 585356
Observer Co-ordinator	Richard Hazell 44, Canterbury Road, Hawkinge. CT18 7BP rufehazell@aol.com	01303 893339
Deputy Observer Co-ordinator	Gary Nichols 14, The Gap, Canterbury, Kent. CT1 3NN garynichols.thegap@tesco.net	01227 453466

Committee

Editor	Michelle Stone Flat 5, 13 Paragon, Ramsgate, Kent. CT11 9JX michelle.stone@tiscali.co.uk	01843 588464
Associate Co-ordinator	Adam Ambrose 104, Grovehurst Road, Kemsley, S'bourne. ME10 2ST	077144 55868 01795 472009
General Committee Members	Anthony Ansell 7, Thornden Wood Road, Herne Bay. CT6 7RY	01227 374080
	Richard Blackford Kelsten, Churchfield Way, Wye. TN25 5EQ	01233 812510
	Steve Tarrant 42, Mill Lane, Harbledown, Canterbury. CT2 8NF	01227 451325
	Nick Williams 38, Bowens Field, Jemmett Rd, Ashford. TN23 4QW nick.williams@environment-agency.gov.uk	077 6605 1233

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.

Thank you.

Well, here I am again and wondering, actually, where the last 3 months went. I merrily finished off the last newsletter, thinking that I wouldn't have to deal with it again for *ages*. Hah! How wrong was I? There must have been a conspiracy to condense 3 months into the space of what felt like one.

I seem to have done so much in the recent months - taking on my new job, learning new stuff on a daily basis, until my brain sneaks away to the corner of my head in an attempt to hide from the information overload, flying around a skid pan with my eyes shut, (yes, really), and (poor Harry) taking on my Observing role.

Last time I wrote I was recovering from the injuries I received when I got knocked off my bike, (and I'm STILL waiting for the Insurance to be sorted out!). Well, not to be out done, Mum took a spectacular swan dive from the top of the stairs, broke bones, gashed her head, made a disgusting mess of the carpet, and generally looked pitiful. Then, to compound matters, (and this really isn't funny), Dad, ever the gentleman, knocked her flying the day she got her stitches out because, as ever, he wasn't looking where he was going. Cue more bruises, grazes etc.

What was most annoying to Mum though was that this happened days before the Skid pan date. In order not to waste the slot, my sister kindly stood in. We took Mum along, and sat her at the side, where she sat and sulked and generally looked miffed. While initially a bit scared of what might be expected of her, my sister threw herself into the experience and now I can only pity anyone using Stagecoach buses in Dover, where she works. Then it was my turn. Having done it before, I was quite confident that I could deal with whatever he threw at me. (For those that haven't been before - and I cannot stress enough

what a valuable experience it is - the car is sat in a hydraulic cradle which the instructor can adjust by remote control, thereby 'changing' the skid type). It all started so well. Then I seemed to get a mental block, and at one end of the skid pan kept getting it horribly wrong. What was the solution? Well, obviously to shut my eyes. I went round and round, actually controlling the skids better than with my eyes open, and getting told off for peeking. Well, honestly. It's *very* difficult NOT to peek. It really is fantastic fun, as well as educational. I know for a fact that I would know what to do if my car skidded. Isn't that something we should all be able to say?

Mum and I are now starting to prepare for our next charity Run from Land's End to John O'Groats. We don't know realistically how much driving Mum is going to be able to do, but wild horses wouldn't keep her away, and fortunately for us, her ability to beg, grovel, plead, ask, pester for sponsorship is completely unimpaired. Once again, we are raising money for Demelza House Children's Hospice. I always find myself amazed that so many people don't realise what Demelza House is, and does, and I can only hope that you will support us, and them. You can read about our last trip on page 9.

Well, that's me signing off until next time. Let's hope the time doesn't feel compelled to pass so quickly this time...

Michelle

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

Letter not from Hellfire Corner

I looked over the hedge into the field.

"Moo" said Daisy.

"Moo-ooh" said Buttercup.

"Moo" said Rover. I'll have to get that dog sorted. You've guessed: I'm in the countryside, what's left of it.

"Moo, boyo", said Daisy. A little clue there, I'm sure of it.

"Moo, isn't it, Max Boyce, Plaid Cymru, etc., etc." said Buttercup, for she was Cow-Brain of Britain, or CBOB for short.

You may by now have surmised that I am in Wales. There are lots of interesting roads, especially the A483 north from Builth Wells to Newtown, Powys. Doing a commentary drive on this one might be extremely interesting, but then it might not, especially if I'm doing it and trying to drive at the same time. Unfortunately, my activities in this direction tend to remind me, and others, of an unlamented ex-president of the good ole US of A, one Gerald Ford, who was never known to walk and chew gum at the same time. I wonder if he got his IAM test? I think not, not if he had to do a commentary. Did he ever knowingly come to Wales? Anyway, methinks I digress.

To get to the point ('bout time!), lots of the minor, and some not so minor, roads in Wales come without "instructions". How so? Allow me to elucidate. They have no, or very few:

1. Double White Lines.
2. Bend or Double Bend Signs.
3. Blind Summit Signs.
4. Examples of artificial road furniture of the sort sprouting up all over our urban and suburban roads. This includes central islands and carbuncles of various sorts.
5. Advisory speed limit signs for corners.
6. "SLOW" signs on the road, but those that do make an appearance have "ARAF"

underneath them. I think it's Welsh - wonder what it means. I can't help being monoglot, or is it monoclot?

So, the result of this "lack of instructions" is that you actually have to drive the road, and not rely on somebody else's opinion of what constitutes a hazard. And very enjoyable it is too. Why are there no "instructions" on these roads? Are they inherently safer than urban and suburban roads? Doubt it. Could it possibly be that the total numbers of those killed and injured on said roads is not that great? I think we may be getting warm. If so, it seems a reasonable basis for a policy: make the roads with the greatest casualties safer, and save the greatest number of lives.

But, surely the individual driver just wants to have some idea of the likelihood that he or she will be killed or injured on any given bit of road, irrespective of how many other people are. A sort of percentage chance of getting to your destination, if you like. This is independent of the totals of killed and injured. New signs could be erected:

YOUR CHANCE OF GETTING TO BIGGLESWADE FROM HERE WITHOUT BEING SERIOUSLY INJURED OR DEADED IS ONLY 99.998%. I WOULDN'T GO IF I WERE YOU, or

MILTON KEYNES? DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT!

This enables a judgment to be made on whether it is worth going along that particular bit of road. Having used your carefully honed intellect to weigh up the pros and cons, you then drive along it anyway because it's where you want to go!

Hold on a minute. . . . who are all these people in white coats? HELP! ARRGGHH!!!

Happy Motoring
Nigel

Drive In Centre

We are proposing to establish a “Drive-In Centre”, in order to provide:

- Observed Runs for unallocated Associates,
- Recruitment opportunities,
- Assessment and demonstration drives,
- Training opportunities for Trainee Observers

Initially, we are proposing to run this on a once a month basis, from 10am – 12 pm Sunday morning.

The proposal has been favourably received by both the Committee and Observers.

We will let you know further details as we progress.

Richard Hazell

Regional Liaison Forum

The East Kent Group was represented at the recent Region 2 Regional Liaison Forum by Paul Clarke, Gary Nichols and Ted Willey. The meeting was held at the AA offices (Fanum House) in Basingstoke on Saturday 22nd March 2003. Most of the 28 Advanced Driving Groups (car and motorcycle) within Region 2 attended the Forum. This was the first of the Region 2 meetings to be held at the AA offices and this venue was kindly offered to the Forum by AA's Deputy Managing Director, Alistair Cheyne. Alistair has recently joined the governing Council of the IAM and we appreciated the opportunity to spend the day using the excellent facilities at Fanum House.

A very full and interesting agenda had been organized to cater for both car drivers and bikers. After a brief introduction by John Mills (Divisional Council Member), Jon Taylor (IAM Motorcycle Examiner Liaison Officer, South) told us about his

fascinating experiences in going international and helping to set up IAM biker training in Turkey. We moan about the condition of our road surfaces in the UK, but the Turks really do have something to complain about!

The next speaker was Magnus Mulliner (of the Southampton Group) who is an Advanced Driver and also a college lecturer conducting research into driver fatigue. Magnus gave a lively and animated talk that highlighted the causes of driver fatigue (such as lack of sleep, being medically unfit to drive and driving without breaks). To combat fatigue, he emphasized the value of taking breaks from driving supplemented with a short sleep and drinking stimulants such as strong coffee and Red Bull. Alarmingly, Magnus reported that 17-20% of drivers admit to having fallen asleep at the wheel whilst driving.

Kim Grove (of the Wey Valley Advanced Motorcyclists) enlightened us about the “Blood Runners”. This is a charity run by a team of highly dedicated volunteers (mainly motorcyclists) who transport blood and other body parts to hospitals at night in the area to the south of London (including Kent). All attendees to the Forum were amazed at the devotion of the Blood Runners and as an expression of our thanks (in advance, should we ever need their services ...hopefully not), a collection was made during the lunch break and the proceeds were gratefully received by Kim.

Keith Cooper (our Regional Coordinator) then gave his report about Region 2. Final figures for the numbers of test passes in 2002-2003 were not available for his report because the IAM year ended after the meeting on March 31st. However, it would appear that Region 2 is doing well compared against other Regions around the UK. Keith finished by expressing his sincere thanks to all the Observers in Region 2 for their

time and dedication in helping to get Associates to test standard.

After lunch, Christopher Bullock (the IAM's Chief Executive) told us that the membership of the IAM is still increasing and that the Skill for Life scheme is now being adopted by most, but not all, of the Groups around the UK. Christopher asked how many Forum attendees were aware of the Skill for Life gift tokens; very few had heard of them. These tokens (available from Head Office) can be purchased for £85 and given as a gift to relatives or friends so that they can embark upon the Skill for Life scheme with a local group.

The reason that these tokens have been introduced (albeit very quietly!) is to allow the recipients to get a surprise gift. The previous way of giving a Skill for Life package as a present required the full consent of the recipient, thereby ruining the element of surprise.

Nigel Cooper (of the Basingstoke Group) gave an excellent talk on the subject of forward planning for IAM Groups. He raised questions such as: What will our Groups look like in 1 year, in 3 years and in 5 years? Will your Group still exist? Are any succession plans in place? Who are the next committee members and are they being coached to take over the role? What is the purpose of our Group? These are all probing questions that should be considered. I know that for our own Group, we have no succession plan and we find it exceedingly difficult to get new or replacement committee members (but we are not alone ...most Groups are in the same boat).

The final session of the day consisted of three short presentations describing different ways that Groups prepare Associates for test. This is a subject that has been discussed on many occasions at previous Region 2 meetings. The three methods are: fixed length course (e.g. first Sunday of every month for four months),

1:1 course (this is the way that we do it) but with a time constraint (e.g. Associates should be test ready having had six or less Observed runs), and an open-ended course where the Associate keeps having Observed runs until they are ready for test (this can be very draining on Group resources if Associates require dozens of runs!). However, no one method is best for all Groups and all three methods have equal success rates. So, the take home message was that if your Group is generating test passes, then you must be doing it right! The East Kent Group is just as successful as many of the other Groups using other methods and our method suits us ...but there is always room for improvement, so we should be prepared to consider alternative methods to prepare Associates for test.

I've attended several Region 2 meetings over the last few years and this was Paul and Teds' first one. We all agreed that we enjoyed the day as it gave us the opportunity to meet with members from other local groups and to hear about Region 2 activities. The next Region 2 Forum is near Reigate in early September. Anyone interested in attending should let a committee member know.

Gary Nichols
Deputy Observer Coordinator

Skid Pan

It was good to have the opportunity to be given advice on management of a skid or better, on how to avoid a skid. We enjoyed our experience on the skid pan in Maidstone. Our instructor was very helpful, but time was much, much too short to get to grips with the techniques necessary. I do wish I had read and intelligently absorbed the excellent article in our "Roadcraft Essential Police Drivers Handbook" pages 79-91 before the event. Having done so now, I'm sure I would have benefited more. But thank you for giving us the experience.

Paddy Brown

Insurance

When we had to renew our car insurance recently, as I thought our quote from our previous insurers, Saga was somewhat high, I tried I.A.M. Select Insurance where we ended up saving a whopping £148, from over £430 down to £282.45, with a lower excess and less restriction on usage. When I tried I.A.M. Select about 5 years ago when they were first publicized, they were not better, but have obviously improved somewhat.

Sheila Redwood

The following letter was received in response to our donation in memory of John Smith

Dear Mrs Stone

On behalf of all the children and families at Demelza House, I would like to thank you very much for your donation of £20.00 received today in memory of your founder member John Smith. This gift will make a vital contribution towards meeting the running costs of this special hospice.

Please accept our condolences. It was so kind of you to think of us at such a sad time.

Thank you, again, for your support.

With very best wishes

Yours sincerely

Dr Anthony Medhurst



I Know a Secret About You

I know a secret about you. Whether you admit it or not, you think that you are a better driver than most. It is human nature to scoff at the mistakes of others. Take the lady who wrote in 'Advanced Driving', Spring 2003 for example. Did you see the letter? She thought she was right to begin to accelerate to reach a higher speed limit as soon as she could see the sign. 'Oh, yes', I thought, 'and I bet she begins to do 30 mph as soon as she can see **that** sign in the distance. Not.' Well, what a twit. And she's supposed to be an advanced driver.

Me too. I'm supposed to be an advanced driver. It's the sort of thing you proudly let slip in idle conversation. At least, I let it slip occasionally but not usually when I am within 100 yards of a car.

I've started a new job. Part of it entails driving clients in a Toyota Praevia. My new colleague was very nervous about driving such a large vehicle so I offered to take her out for a run early one morning before either of us had to ferry it around full of people. I did sort of mention the advanced test to her. Just to put her mind at rest. We signed the vehicle out and I got into the drivers seat. (Hope that tactic impressed her, to start with.) Did all the right checks ... seat- height and distance, mirrors – rear view and wing, location of wipers, lights, check gear lever, switch on and off we go.

Coo, there's a bit of power under the bonnet of one of those. Puts my Corsa in the shade. There we were bombing along the A2 (part of my cunning plan. Drive to Wincheap Safeway car-park, having impressed her with the ease with which the vehicle can be driven, let her have a twiddle round the car-park and then, depending on how she felt, one of us drive back in time to start work at 10.00) 'Ooh', I said, 'we're doing 80 miles an hour', nervous laugh. 'Better watch this, it just runs away with you.' 'Ooh', I said, 'there's a light come up on the dashboard ... oh, s*** we've got no petrol.

Oh s***, s*** I've missed the exit for Wincheap.'

I stopped pretending to be in control at that point. (This may sound familiar to Nick Williams, I often did not pretend to be in control when we were driving around together.) (Of, the car, I mean. Not myself. Not that Nick isn't lovely.) So, doing 80 miles an hour past the last exit before the motorway junction, in a car with no petrol and nearly late for work. Rapid change of plan. 'Umm, got any money on you?' I casually asked. I am just like the Queen. Never carry money. Ask my husband. A quick search of her handbag revealed five pounds. Next stop Gateway services and worry about her driving lesson later. Did you pass the services that morning? Did you see two women walking round an enormous vehicle looking for the hole to put the petrol in? Or one woman scrabbling on the floor of the vehicle to find the release for the cap?

We put our five pounds worth in, did a rapid turn round at the roundabout, did a very quick jaunt around the car-park at the Garden Centre and then my friend decided to drive us back to work. I expect by that time she had gained confidence seeing my more than competent handling of each situation as it arose.

We thankfully handed the keys in at reception, told the receptionist we had put petrol in and got to our work room with seconds to spare. The next person to take the vehicle out also worked in our department. He has not yet let us, or anyone else forget, that we put only £5 worth of petrol in a tank that takes nearly £50.

I found out later that we were not covered by the company insurance to drive that morning as the relevant form had not been signed. But that is another story.

Am I a better driver than most? I secretly like to think that I am.

Carol & Michelle's Mini Marathon

A little under a year ago Carol and Michelle participated in a marathon charity event, which saw them travel over 2,000 miles round Great Britain in Carol's 10-year old Mini Neon.

The pair travelled to the South West to join a further 11 Minis to start the famous journey from Land's End to John O'Groats. The tour organised by the North Devon Mini Register, sponsored Children's Hospice South West in Bideford, Devon. Michelle and Carol visited the hospice on their way to their starting point, along with Carlton Television who were filming in aid of the Mini run. Our duo chose to raise money for the charity Demelza House, a local children's hospice based in Sittingbourne. "Demelza House is run solely on donations," explained Carol, "They have only four paid members of staff and the rest are all volunteers, so they need as many contributions as possible."

The journey itself covered 1,004 miles from Land's End to John O'Groats and was completed in three days by the convoy of Minis, stopping off at campsites along the way. The 12 cars were able to keep in contact with one another through the use of CB. They were initially installed in case the cars got split up, but as they travelled up the country they became a great source of amusement, picking up all sorts of radio waves including a couple of elderly Yorkshire ladies chatting away about what they were having for tea! Asked if the journey ran smoothly, Michelle replied, "We didn't have any major hiccups apart from Car No. 2 breaking down just as we were leaving Land's End." She then went on to describe the traffic mayhem in Glasgow, "There were so many lanes of traffic that even with the CB radios, it was impossible for the 12 Minis to stick together. Everyone got split up and it took another two hours for us to all meet up and get on the road again!"

Once they had reached John O'Groats, an afternoon was spent taking photographs and buying souvenirs

to render their challenge complete. And then it was home again – stopping at Inverness, Gretna and Verwood campsites over the subsequent days before hitting the M25 back towards Ramsgate. Including the miles driven over the Mini run, the pair clocked up an amazing 2,496 miles using just £147.30 in petrol. They managed to raise approximately £1,000 for Demelza House, with sponsorship from numerous local companies including Hornby Hobbies, Sericol and Pfizer. Describing the Mini marathon they conclude, "We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Not only do you get to raise loads of money for your chosen charity but also you get to travel with a whole load of like-minded Mini lovers."

For more information about Demelza House contact Sue Bedborough on (01843) 585522 or visit www.demelzahouse.org.



Carol & Michelle

Editor's Warning - BEWARE

We are preparing to complete this journey again, (injuries not withstanding), and would be grateful for your continued support. Carol will be looking hopefully in your direction for some sponsorship.

Thank you.

IAM LAUNCHES 2003 ROAD SAFETY AWARD

The Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) has started this year's search for an individual who has made the most significant contribution to the road safety of young drivers and riders.

The Dominic Fox Award 2003 seeks to acknowledge and celebrate outstanding road safety work that has benefited, directly or indirectly, road users in the age group 17-25. Statistics show that younger drivers and riders are consistently the UK's most vulnerable road users.

One in three crashes involves young men under the age of 20. 12 per cent of drivers involved in injury accidents are aged between 17-21, yet they only account for seven per cent of licence holders.

"Our ideal candidate will be somebody with a long history in road safety, whose contribution will have already been recognised. But their work and the positive effect it has had for younger riders and drivers may have gone unnoticed so far," said IAM Chief Executive Christopher Bullock.

The Dominic Fox Award is named after the IAM's youngest Council member, who died unexpectedly in 2000, at just 32.

"The award is given in the name of Dominic Fox who brought a fresh eye to the promotion of safer driving for younger drivers and motorcyclists," said Mr Bullock.

The winner will receive a trophy and a monetary award.

Nomination forms for the award, which was introduced last year, are available from the IAM Head Office on 020 8996 9600 or can be downloaded from the IAM website, www.iam.org.uk, in either

Adobe Acrobat PDF File format or HTML format for printing.

The deadline for nominations is 31 July 2003.

*Issued by the IAM Press Office. Further details from
Vince Yearley, 020 8996 9625.
9 May 2003*

CAMERAS SAVE LIVES. ROAD SAFETY MINISTER TELLS IAM MEMBERS

Road Safety Minister David Jamieson has challenged continually misquoted statistics about safety cameras.

Writing in the spring issue of *Advanced Driving*, the magazine of the Institute of Advanced Motorists, Mr Jamieson said he felt the need to put before IAM members the contribution that safety cameras are making to reducing deaths and serious injuries on UK roads.

Mr Jamieson said that he wanted to set the record straight about the relationship between speed and accidents.

"The figures that are often quoted of speed contributing to no more than four percent to seven percent of accidents are inaccurate and mischievous," he said. The Minister cited the latest independent research showing that, over a two-year trial, 280 fewer people were killed or seriously injured on the road at safety camera sites - a 35 percent reduction in killed and seriously injured (KSJ) statistics.

*17 March 2003
Issued by the IAM Press Office
020 8996 9625.*

SAFE SITES START ON THE ROAD OUTSIDE, SAYS IAM FLEET

Building site workers are more likely to be injured driving to and from the site than they are while actually at work, warned IAM Fleet, the UK's leading advanced driving trainers, today (14 May 2003).

Bob Hinchliffe, IAM Fleet UK National Business Manager, told visitors to Site Safe Scotland at Glasgow's Hampden Park that according to research by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the most dangerous thing most people do is to drive on the public highway.

"Not many people realise that driving a car or a van is more dangerous than either deep sea fishing or coal mining. And for building workers, the facts are stark: you are more likely to be at risk driving than you are on the construction site itself," said Mr Hinchliffe.

Building workers can help themselves by thinking of the van as an extension of the site and have their own in-cab safety drill, said Mr Hinchliffe.

"Have you got the right licence for that vehicle? Lots of minibus drivers, for example, don't know that the legal requirements have changed. Then there is the safety of the vehicle. Are the contents safely stowed in the back or could they become a potential hazard in the event of a crash? Are the tyres 'blow outs' waiting to happen, with nails and site debris embedded in them?" he asked.

'Attitude, concentration, observation, space and time are all life savers. There is a cost to road safety - but it is one worth paying," said Mr Hinchliffe.

IAM Fleet trains occupational drivers in the construction sector such as Taylor Woodrow and Barclay Homes. Any firm who wants to find out more about how they can benefit from savings can

contact IAM Fleet in Scotland on 0131 445 1224 or visit iamfleet.com.

Issued by the IAM Press Office. Further details from Vince Yearley, 020 8996 9625.

14 May 2003

Did you know?

The Auto Express magazine compiled some interesting figures that showed that a third of the 62,000 vehicles taken for an MOT on a typical day failed the test. On an average day 3,378 speeding fines are issued, and 745 drivers lock themselves out of their cars. Meanwhile, 15,068 drivers make an Insurance claim. The fuel bought each day is 74 million litres of petrol and 29 million litres of diesel. The Government pockets £104 million a day in motor related taxes.

Further, on Motorways, 9,041 breakfasts are sold - many to truckers who cover 107 million miles in 430,000 lorries. Drivers run over around 273 hedgehogs, 137 badgers, and 110 deer every day. How often, if you are out early, do you see animals that have lost their lives on the road. The most common, I would think, is the fox which was not in the Report.

Originally printed in April 2003 Segment Newsletter (South Eastern Group of Advanced Motorists)

Why do we drive on the left side of the road when almost everyone else drives on the right?

Rosemary Wilson, Inverness

The simple fact that a large majority of the human race has always been right-handed accounts for our driving habits. Early road users kept to the left, so they could draw swords or level lances with their right arms. And, in 1300, Pope Boniface VIII directed pilgrims to Rome to keep to the left, an edict that had something of the force of law. Skip forward to the 18th century and you find that the driver was usually seated on the right, so that he could wield his whip in his right hand without interference from the load behind him, and could see down the right-hand side of the wagon to make sure that axle hubs and wheels didn't clash when passing oncoming wagons. Consequently, all countries that were part of the British Empire drove on the left.

One of the reasons America took to the right side of the road goes back to the design of their freight wagons in the 1790s. Bigger than those used here, they had no driver's seat and drivers controlled the horses by riding on the rear-left horse, using a whip in their right hand. When wagons travelling in opposite directions had to pass, each instinctively moved to their right. French freight wagons were designed in a similar way – and Napoleon, resenting the old papal directive, preferred to drive on the right. So, in countries conquered by Napoleon, the keep-right policy became and remained the rule.

*Andrew Howard, AA Head of Road Safety
Acknowledgements – AA Magazine Spring
2003*

The Bank Loan

A blonde walks into a bank in New York City and asks for the loan manager. She says she's going to Europe on business for two weeks and needs to borrow \$5,000. The bank manager says the bank will need some kind of security for the loan, so the blonde hands over the keys to a new Rolls Royce. The car is parked on the street in front of the bank, she has the title and everything checks out. The bank agrees to accept the car as collateral for the loan. The bank's president and its managers enjoy a good laugh at the blonde for using a \$250,000 Rolls as collateral against a \$5,000 loan. Two weeks later, the blonde returns, repays the \$5,000 and the interest, which comes to \$15.41.

The loan manager says "Miss, we are very happy to have had your business, and this transaction has worked out very nicely, but we are a little puzzled. While you were away, we checked you out and found out that you are a multi-millionaire. What puzzles us is why you bother to borrow \$5,000?"

The blonde replies... "Where else in New York City can I park my car for two weeks while I go on holiday for only \$15.41 and expect it to be there when I return?"

*Originally printed in April 2003 Segment
Newsletter (South Eastern Group of
Advanced Motorists)*

Take Care with your Mobile Phone!

Several men are in the changing room of a golf club. A mobile phone on a bench rings and a man engages the hands free speaker-function and begins to talk.

MAN: "Hello"

WOMAN: "Hi, it's me. Are you at the club?"

MAN: "Yes"

WOMAN: "I am at the shopping precinct now and found this beautiful leather coat and it's only £1,000. Is it OK if I buy it?"

MAN: "Sure, go ahead if you like it that much."

WOMAN: "I also stopped by the Mercedes dealership and saw the new 2003 models. I saw one I really liked."

MAN: "How much?"

WOMAN: "£60,000"

MAN: "OK, but for that price I want it with all the options."

WOMAN: "Great! Oh, and one more thing....the house we wanted last year is back on the market. They're asking £950,000."

MAN: "Well, go ahead and give them an offer, but no more than £900,000."

WOMAN: "OK. I'll see you later! I love you!"

MAN: "Bye, I love you, too."

The man hangs up. The other men in the changing room are looking at him in astonishment.

Then he asks: "Anyone know who this phone belongs to?"

What if... an animal runs out into the road ahead?

Many animals' first reactions to shock is to freeze. But not all. And to add to the fun, once frozen they're like an unexploded bomb - and likely to make a sudden movement. Part of the problem is that animals have 'flight zones' - the distance you can approach to before they move away and they're designed for the speeds other animals, not motorbikes or cars, move. Nor do animals have any concept of the consequences of a collision. And since a sheep can write off a car and a cow a lorry it's worth having a plan.

SHEEP Very strong flocking instinct, so they tend to run directly away from you, initially, then veer round. If sheep are alarmed they look straight at you (i.e. their nose points at you); if they just use one eye (i.e. looking sideways), they are more calm and probably won't run.

Aim for: behind.

HORSES An alarmed horse has head up, pricked ears, and flared nostrils. They tend to stand very still, but then react very suddenly, and in any direction.

The most common behaviour for a surprised ridden horse is to jump around a lot from side to side, trying to swing their back end round sideways, which is very, very dangerous. If you think the back end is going to come into contact with you or the bike, leap out of the way sideways not backwards — they will almost certainly kick out if they touch something with their back end in a frightened state, and you do not, repeat do not, want to be hit by the steel shod foot of a horse. Moving sideways gets you out of the danger zone, moving backwards does not.

Aim for: front.

DOGS Frightened dogs have their ears down, tail between their legs, and have a slight crouching

walk. They also just run away, which helps avoid them. Watch them closely as you go past because they frequently (but not always) wait for you to go past before they launch a sprinting attack. Blast your horn as many dogs are very deaf.

Aim for: behind.

CATS Put their heads down and dash across the road, so are harder to hit than miss.

Aim for: behind.

RABBITS If you are a rabbit, absolutely everything is out to get you, so they are timid.

Aim for: straight ahead.

DEER Being a wild prey species, they run from everything, and usually don't change direction, hoping to be fast enough to beat everything that might chase them.

Aim for: behind.

HEDGEHOGS Nocturnal animals, so watch out at night near hedges or overgrown verges. Hedgehogs cross the same roads at the same times of day every day. If approached, they tend to curl up and stay where they are.

Aim for: front or back.

COWS If standing in the road they will not move and like moving backwards least of all.

Aim for: behind.

PHEASANTS Suicidal creatures. Expect the unexpected. Aim for: take your pick.

Ride 87

Who or what am I?

I got up early the other morning. Half-past-six. I'd planned the day for some time. Heard it was best to get up with the lark to be sure of standing the best chance of sighting the quarry. Quick shower, bite to eat, cup of tea. Didn't waste too much time, otherwise all the planning would be wasted. Looked at the equipment list and checked off the items one by one:

Flask. Sandwiches (Most important. Must keep the inner self happy). OS Map. (The new orange Explorer series is very good, but if you cannot stretch to this then the old Landranger series is almost as good, but there is not so much detail.) It is best to have highlighted your likely viewing places beforehand. Ideally, you should choose these to park off-road and out of sight. There can be certain exceptions to this rule, which only the most brazen will employ (See later). Binoculars. 8 x 40 are perfectly adequate. 10 x 50's are a bit too heavy and shaky for rapid scanning. Notebook. Pen. Phone (to report sightings and good viewing places quickly to fellow enthusiasts). Personal stereo, as there may be long periods of inactivity followed by 20 seconds of breathless scrabbling (the story of my life!). Warm clothing in winter, as there can be surprising activity on clear, bright days in the colder months, despite the short day length.

Right. We're all set then. Drive to one of pre-determined viewing places. Organise pages in notebook. I usually divide each page into four columns:

DATE	TIME	POSITION	CATEGORY
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The first two are self-explanatory. For the Position, you can describe it if you really want, but it is neater and more sensible to use the OS grid reference. The fourth column, Category, is the most interesting. It is this one that shows

the real expert. Entries such as “White Van”, or “Motorbike”, or “Pram” are just too vague to be useful. I must admit this last one is unlikely to appear anyway, but is used only for the purposes of illustration. But on the other hand there is danger in being too specific: imagine the difficulty which could arise if we had, in addition to the first three columns, something like “White Escort Van 1.8D, reg. V123 ABC” in the fourth column. The driver’s livelihood might be at risk, his (or her!) property and family could be threatened, his gerbil could be confiscated, his dog could be followed (tailed? - not if it’s a Boxer), or he may be confined within four walls and forced to watch endless episodes of “I’m a (fading) celebrity – get me out of here!” He may be forced to sell his beloved (!) Escort van and replace it with a metallic blue and terra cotta – sorry, rust – Vauxhall Nova with 4 megawatt sound system and red-painted brake drums. He might even be introduced to the IAM. This last one does seem somewhat unlikely.

I think, in the end, the best approach is simply to omit the registration. I have found that by remaining concealed and not making too much noise, or wearing green or orange Dayglo jackets you can, by the end of the day, have quite a collection in your notebook.

There are some “twitchers”, however, for whom this benign and safe approach does not yield sufficient satisfaction. These intrepid individuals may indeed admit of a fifth column in their notebook, so that it becomes:

DATE TIME POSITION CATEGORY PROXIMITY

They can then record the nearness, or, to use the jargon, proximity, of the said vehicle to the observer. Street-cred is inversely proportional to this distance. Some observers (the so-called “Brazen” alluded to earlier) decide not to park

off-road, but display their vehicles, as if they are indeed challenging the quarry to show itself. It has to be said that they are likely to attract a different sort of quarry. Not for them the likes of Escort Van, Vauxhall Astra and Ford Mondeo. No, they are after bigger fish. They want Mitsubishi Evo, Subaru Impreza, and Porsche Boxster and 911, and various superbikes with which I am not familiar, but I am sure Michelle knows only too well.

When I and others have succeeded in collecting lots of details in our little notebooks, we post the information on our website, www.rosपो.com, for all to see. Occasionally, we have photos, or even videoclips as well, but we don’t show registration plates. I think it is only by letting people see that this still goes on legally that we will encourage them to partake in the activity themselves, and hopefully involve others, although only those over seventeen.

To answer the question posed at the beginning, who or what am I? I am a member of “rosपो”, the **Royal Society for the Preservation of Overtaking**.

Anon.

New Associates since March 2002

Mr David Gabriel
 Mrs Carole Seabrook
 Mrs Gillian Jukes
 Mr Paul Towns
 Miss Claire Brasier
 Dr Adam Fendius
 Mrs Rosemary Lynch
 Miss Carolyn Acors
 Miss Christine Greig
 Mr Phillip Plant
 Mr Hamish Halls
 Mr James Graham
 Mr Peter Cartwright

New Members

Mr Harald Gardiner

Events Data

Littlebourne WMH - Second Thursday - 19.30pm

June - Manoeuvring evening at the H.G.V. Test centre in Hersden. Plenty of room and lots of fun last year.

July - John Adams, Pfizer. Talking about his role in Academic Liaison. (Moved from February).

August – Model Planes Club

September – Colin Carr, Sandwich Boatman. Talking about various water based matters, including Harbourmaster's job.

Test Passes

Period: 15.02.03 - 18.04.03

Date	Associate	Observer
15.02.03	Hazel Taupin	Ray Pittet
27.03.03	Donald Butcher	Richard Blackford
18.04.03	Clive Hawkins	Ted Willey

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