

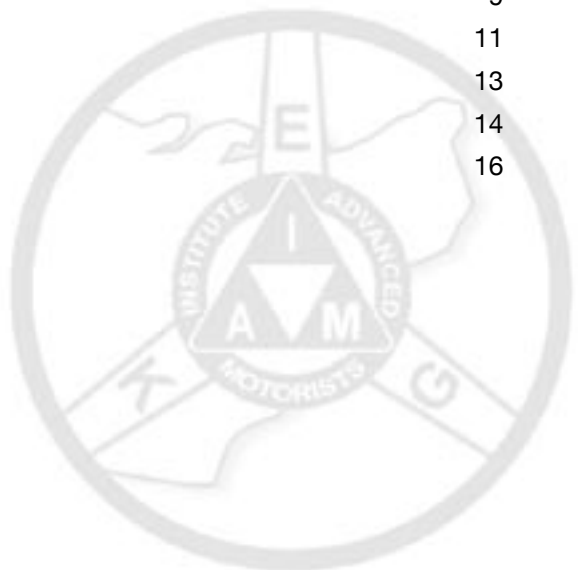
EAST KENT GROUP

Newsletter June 2004



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| | | |
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Committee

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
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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.

Thank you.

I'm afraid there's no Editorial this newsletter, due to family circumstances, and as our Chairman has gone on holiday there is also nothing to be heard 'From the Chair'.

Hopefully things will be heading towards normal by the next newsletter.

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've oft heard it said that Roadcraft is the Advanced Motorist's Bible.

Personally, I prefer the view that the System of Car Control and the Advanced Driving Skills, as set out in Roadcraft, lay down the Principles on which Advanced Driving is based.

The reason for my slightly differing view is that the "System" was formalised in 1937, when the Hendon Police Driving School was founded and, therefore, became the core of Police Driver Training.

It appears to me then, that we should be mindful of the fact that we cannot have the same expectations of the average driver as we would of a professional driver.

What first started me off thinking about this was the Pre-drive and Roadworthiness check on pages 170 and 171 of Roadcraft. When having some Observed Drives with Rospa, I was expected to learn each of the specified checks and for the life of me I couldn't understand why I should have to recite the engine type, type of drive and type of gear box, number and position of gears (I should clarify that I never completed the Rospa course due to lack of Observer availability).

It is important to know and understand your own car but, as a one car family at the time, I didn't see the need to recite this every time I got into the car. My feeling was that this applied to people with access to pool cars.

In this modern age, these pre-drive checks would apply also to members of two or three car families.

Of course, modern cars are faster, safer and regularly maintained, but it is appropriate to carry out the pre-drive checks as stipulated when driving a **different car**. One of the modern day anomalies is not only the number and position of gears, but also the positioning of the indicator stalk, particularly as Japanese cars tend to have them of opposite sides to the majority of European cars. How many of us have actually have switched on the windscreen wipers when meaning to indicate?

I will be looking to discuss Pre-Drive and Roadworthiness Checks in the next issue, and would be glad to hear and/or read your views in the meantime, on what these should entail for the average driver.

Richard Hazell



Is it dark in here?

I would not have gone that way but for the thought that a box of butter shortbread biscuits would cheer up my friend in hospital. The roundabout to Sainsbury's came into view and there was a policeman viewing my progress towards him with what I considered to be the hint of a smile. Would I please go to left and see the officers in yellow coats.

In the coach park where I was directed were about half a dozen fluorescent jacketed figures, a patrol car, a red Transit-sized van and a red hatchback where most of the attention was being focussed. I switched off and waited. A fluorescent coat moved in my direction and the WPC said that the windscreen and side glass were to be checked for the amount of light they let through. No trouble there then I thought; this was how the car came to me from the dealer. I'd not modified this unlike hot-hatch man over there had done to his. She continued as if my thoughts had been read - that gentleman's windows are only letting through 25% of the light. Sure did look dark in there, but that dark?

After a further wait it was my turn. A male colleague repeated what was to happen and that first the glass would be wiped to ensure an accurate reading was obtained. The instrument appeared, being a hand-held box with wires connecting it to two circular pieces of similar diameter, the larger about an inch across and high. These two pieces were aligned carefully either side of the glass and the reading displayed on the box was shown to me; 32.8, a move to another part of the glass, 32.7 another move gave 32.9. The passenger side was much the same. Finally a show of what was coming through the windscreen, 80.

An explanation followed. It meant that as the front side windows were letting through less than 75% of the light I would be issued with a Roadworthiness Prohibition Notice which would come into effect in 10 days time prohibiting use of the vehicle if the defect remained and that the vehicle would have to be re-inspected before the notice could be cancelled. How long had I owned the vehicle? The Voyager had been mine for nearly a year and I'd not altered the glass. Best contact the dealer then.

A further wait ensued while the official notice was prepared in the back of the van and was then presented to me for signature and my retention and further explanation. It was likely I would need to take the car to their base in Gillingham when the rectification had been made for checking.

It was a much shorter visit to Kent and Canterbury Hospital than I'd planned and without the shortbread. I called in at the dealer on the way home, presented my Prohibition Notice and discussed my situation i.e. that it was not my fault and what could be done. Fortunately the tint was just a film or coating, so a costly change of glass was not necessary. Coincidentally the tinting specialist was to be visiting later in the day and the tint could be removed then. The fault aspect was not entirely clarified, the man at the dealer taking the view that the vehicle had been sold to me in good faith; which I did not dispute. However they did agree with me that I would not pay for the removal of the tinting which was satisfactory.

The work was over in 20 minutes. The side windows looked the same as the screen. I took a chance and fortunately the Inspectors were still on the coach park, though the police had gone. Another check of the glass was made and though it was not up to the standard of the windscreen the inspector was satisfied and I was given a form rescinding the prohibition.

So what are we to make of this new bit of vehicle law?

Well firstly, according to the Frequently Asked Questions sheet I was given, it would seem that this is not a completely new law. A look at the Department for Transport website shows it to be an amendment to Regulation 32(10) of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 which prescribes levels of light transmission for windcreens and other windows. The intent of the Regulation is to ensure that drivers have a clear view of the road, other traffic and pedestrians so as to enable them to drive safely. The amendment now includes the use of 'film', 'tint', or 'any other substance applied to the windows'. The Regulation refers to vehicles used before 1st April 1985 that must have windcreens and front side windows to either side of the driver's head letting through 70% of the visual light transmission (VLT) and that those used on or after must allow 75% of VLT.

Are these criteria to be strictly enforced?

The FAQ sheet states that enforcement action will only be taken when the glass has VLT significantly below the required level and that notification will be given of the measured values. In cases where examiners encounter vehicles with excessively tinted glass but do not have the equipment to measure VLT, action will be taken only in the worst instances of non-compliance. Information I have seen on a non-government

website says that if between 45% and 65% of light gets through, the driver is advised to have the tinting removed; failure to do so might result in a prosecution and a fine of up to £2000.

So apart from being issued with a Roadworthiness Prohibition Notice are there other implications?

Yes, for insurance and I quote from the FAQ sheet- "Any modification to a vehicle that alters the standards to which it was manufactured is likely to render the insurance invalid. If the modification also makes it illegal for use because it breaches the legal requirements then this becomes a certainty."

These insurance implications are the most worrying. To begin with I have been blissfully ignorant that the car has been modified at all (and I always believed I could see adequately). In addition I have been unaware of the Regulation on tinted windows. Finally, I probably should have notified my insurer immediately I discovered that there was a modification and sought their approval for any further road use.

Apart from watching out for potholes, there's a minefield out there too!

Peter Burton

The Special Assessment

Upon receiving my Senior Observer Certificate, enclosed within were a nice letter and an application form inviting me to apply for the IAM Special Assessment. I made some enquiries, including telephoning IAM headquarters, but information was scarce. Not being daunted I decided to apply and sent off the application and £60 fee.

I received an acknowledgment that contained a worrying paragraph, which read as follows:

“May I remind you that you are expected to be fully and properly prepared for a very demanding and stringent examination of your driving skills and knowledge. Nothing other than the very highest standard is expected from you and if it is evident you are not fully and properly prepared, the Examiner will terminate your Special Assessment and your fee will not be refunded.”

I then received a telephone call from the examiner - not a local examiner but the Assistant Chief Examiner, Trevor Poxon. A date and time were set, at a location away from the candidate's own postal district - in my case we agreed to meet at Wrotham Heath.

On the agreed date I met the examiner and after a short briefing and a check on the car and documents I began my assessment drive. The drive was conducted along an assortment of roads around the Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Maidstone area and included three manoeuvres. This was followed by two multiple choice test papers, one on Roadcraft and one on traffic signs.

The assessment itself was quite challenging and tiring – the first attempt at anything is always the most difficult, because you don't know what to expect. In this case, it was a high-ranking examiner I had never met before, and driving in an unfamiliar area (in fact, the first road he directed me into was closed to traffic because of road works!) It was challenging because trying to make as much safe progress as possible whilst giving a commentary is very demanding. It was tiring because I was under test conditions and, if you can remember Nigel Stevens's talk, he mentioned how tiring commentary driving can be.

After completing the assessment I was given a verbal debrief and in due course received a full written report.

I took the opportunity to ask Mr Poxon about the worrying paragraph in my letter of acknowledgement, and told him that my particular concern was that information about the assessment was very limited, even when I approached IAM headquarters.

He replied that there is no recognised training for the assessment and that you are expected to train yourself! I shouldn't have been surprised – I passed my original IAM driving test without any prior training (no observer was available), and when I enquired about becoming a Senior Observer I was given an application form and a note asking me to inform the Observer Coordinator when I had passed! I really should have known better.

Several aspects of my drive were criticised - the main ones being my car's lack of power and my inability to give a fluent commentary. At no time prior to the assessment was I given any indication that the result would be affected by the performance of my car; indeed, when arranging to meet Mr Poxon I had to give him its details (a

900cc Suzuki Swift) and no mention was made of the fact that my car might not be suitable.

With regard to my commentary, again this is self-taught – I have been unable to get any instruction on this subject – when I asked Mr Poxon if he could recommend a training provider he was unable to do so – his only suggestion was to find a “tame” police driver – does anybody know one?

I have now received the written report, which is broken down into three main parts each with its own elements. The first part is VEHICLE CONTROL, which has eight elements, the second part is PLANNING, which has nine elements, and the third part is ROADCRAFT, which has nine elements. The report concludes with the following paragraph headed GENERAL REMARKS:

“A candidate who takes a genuine interest in driving and tries to deliver the best. I feel that the car’s limitations took the edge off the performance generally. Whilst there was clear evidence of system knowledge, application was a little inconsistent which resulted in a lack of polish and finesse at times. Commentary needs developing in terms of both content and fluency.”

The result is given as a percentage of the perfect drive (which, as they rightly state, it is impossible to achieve) - in my case 70%. This result was achieved by trying to implement everything I had learned from reading about advanced driving, asking questions and using the answers supplied by other drivers.

In conclusion, I hope you have found this enlightening and will all rush out and apply for the Special Assessment – having read this you will have the benefit of my experience, and will go into it better prepared than I was able to. The only two pieces of advice I can offer to help you demonstrate your abilities to the best advantage are to ensure that the vehicle you use has sufficient power (I would suggest no less than 1200 cc), and to find that “tame” police driver!

Good luck!

Barrie Bailey

The Search is on...

For Britain’s safest Truck Driver, Car Driver, Biker. So, you think you’re a star of the highway? Well, now’s your chance to prove it.

Moto, Britain’s biggest motorway service area operator, has teamed up with the Institute of Advanced Motorists to put the country’s road users under the microscope and find our safest drivers.

We’re looking for the top trucker, classiest car driver and best biker. The top six in each category will take part in a grand final that will involve demonstrating their skills on the open road as well as on a private track.

Answer the questions on this form correctly and you could be on the road to winning one of the fabulous prizes on offer.

Big Thunder - the ultimate driving experience in everything from pocket rockets to giant diggers.

Racing know-how - definitive bike control and the tricks of the track stars at the Ron Haslam Racing Academy.

Successful entrants will be invited to take part in regional finals which will take the form of advanced theory tests. The final, which will be a practical test of driving skills, will take place at the Driving Standards Agency's training ground at Cardington, Bedfordshire.

To enter, contact Sheila Redwood for a form, or enter online at www.moto-way.co.uk

Kent Gliding Club Flying Evenings

Kent Gliding Club welcomes new members. Members at Kent Gliding Club range from a variety of backgrounds, professions and ages. Flying members at Kent range between sixteen and eighty three years of age. Gliding is a sport for almost everyone.

A flying evening is when a group, of between 5 and 25 get together to try their hand at flying gliders. If you want to organise a flying evening, call 01233 740274 with details of the number in your party and when you want to fly. Flying evenings are restricted to week days and it is a good idea to have more than one date in mind as your first choice may not be available.

Kent Gliding Club Limited
Squids Gate
Challock
Ashford
Kent TN25 4DR
Telephone: 01233 740274
Fax: 01233 740811
E-mail: soaring@kent-gliding-club.co.uk

Region 2 Conference

The East Kent Group was represented at the recent Region 2 Regional Liaison Forum by Richard Hazell and Gary Nichols. The meeting was held at the Hickstead Hotel, Bolney, near Burgess Hill, West Sussex on Saturday 20th March 2004, which was a very wet and windy day. Of the 28 car and motorcycle Advanced Driving Groups within Region 2, 27 groups were represented, which is a very good turnout.

After John Mills (our Divisional Council Member) welcomed the delegates, the first presentation of the day was by Gareth Tuffery, who is the Senior Road Safety Officer for Surrey. He told us about his wide ranging duties that include: training youngsters to pass their cycling proficiency test, advising pedestrians about road safety, helping to set-up walking buses, motorcycle training and speed advice days. He emphasised the need for Road Safety Officers to work in partnership with driving groups to achieve safer roads for all.

On 1st April 2004, the Skill for Life scheme became compulsory for all groups and is now the only way by which new Associates can join the IAM. The advantages for groups are many and it reduces the administrative burden on group committee members. Since it was first introduced in 1996, Skill for Life has been adopted voluntarily by just about every group in the UK, including the East Kent Group. However, there are a few "rebellious" groups (two of which are in our region) that do not want to use the Skill for Life scheme. Their reasons are weak and trivial.

Christopher Bullock (the IAM's Chief Executive) reiterated that over the last seven years he has heard many excuses from groups for not adopting Skill for Life, but all were unfounded.

I only hope that the two groups in our region see sense and realise that they are volunteers and have nothing to gain by being bloody-minded. The executive of the IAM do know how to run the organisation and are doing their best to prepare it for the future. I hope that we never have to hear groups bleating tediously on and on about Skill for Life ever again.

Following on from a presentation at last year's Region 2 conference about driver fatigue, Matt Guild spoke to us about Red Bull, a non-alcoholic, caffeine-based energiser drink. Red Bull has been clinically proven to help reduce driver fatigue during research conducted at the Loughborough Sleep Research Centre. If you do feel tired when driving, then nothing is a substitute for sleep. However, drinking 2 cans of Red Bull and having a 15 minute nap can combat tiredness. As a bonus for delegates, complimentary cans of Red Bull were given away (see, there are perks for donating a Saturday to the East Kent Group!!).

Tributes and a presentation were made to Keith Cooper by John Mills and Jean Clark. Keith has recently resigned as our Regional Coordinator because of work commitments.

Robert Van Dissel (who is currently the Acting Regional Coordinator) gave a brief report about groups in the region. John Mills presented the Mid-Kent Group with the 2004 Dunlop Award, which is given to the group in Region 2 that has made a significant and consistent contribution to the aims of the IAM.

After lunch, Christopher Bullock gave the Head Office report. IAM membership has increased during the last year and is now at around 112,000, with over 95% of members renewing every year. The Daewoo scheme is still continuing and from April 2004, buyers of Jaguar cars will also be also get a free Skill for Life pack (this should please our Observers!).

The final session of the day was about the IAM Special Assessment. Trevor Poxon (Deputy Chief Examiner) described the assessment, which is **not** a test, but a very challenging appraisal of the candidate's advanced driving skills. If you want to find out more about the Special Assessment, then take a look at the IAM website (<http://www.iam.org.uk>) or telephone the IAM. Only consider taking it if you are really serious about your driving; it is not for the faint-hearted and un-prepared!

Please be aware that the East Kent Group cannot prepare you to take the Special Assessment. Following Trevor's presentation, two members that have recently taken the Special Assessment in a car and on a motorcycle described their experiences. Both found the assessment to be challenging and tiring, but worthwhile.

The next Region 2 Forum is on Saturday 11th September at Kingswood, near Reigate, Surrey. Anyone interested in attending should let a committee member know.

*Gary Nichols
Deputy Observer Coordinator*

New Trainees

The Observer training programme is going well, with the monthly Sunday Drive-In providing an invaluable training opportunity. Here are three new trainees who are now building up their 10hrs before Testing, their names are Richard Rhoden, Philip Plant and Domenic De Paolis.



“Sneezy Drivers” May Be Coming to a Road near You, Says IAM

Issued: 20 April 2004

Hay fever sufferers at the wheel may pose a risk to themselves and other road users, says the IAM, the UK’s leading driver and rider safety specialists.

As we approach the start of the hay fever season, it’s worth reflecting that a sudden burst of sneezing can often cause a driver to lose concentration and vision for a considerable distance. This means that if a hay fever sufferer has a bout of eight or nine sneezes when travelling at 70 mph on a motorway, vision could be lost for up to half a mile.

Bryan Lunn, IAM Chief Examiner, says that if you don’t suffer from hay fever, remember that the driver in front or behind you may be one of

the UK’s estimated ten million hay fever sufferers about to have a bout of sneezing and go “blind “ for some considerable distance.

While motorists normally pay attention to major health problems that can affect their driving skills, they pay less attention to the host of mundane illnesses that affect many drivers and can increase their risk of having a crash.

“A cold, a headache, tiredness, stress, indigestion, a stiff neck, a bad back, stiff joints, feeling claustrophobic in tunnels, the fear of insects in the car - the list is endless,” said Mr Lunn.

“There are some simple things that a driver can do to if he or she is having a bad hay fever day.

Obviously, if it’s really bad, you shouldn’t drive at all. If your journey is really necessary, try to get someone else to do the driving. Keep all the windows closed all the time to reduce the number of pollen grains in the car and vacuum all the mats, carpets and upholstery every week to get rid of the dust.”

Mr Lunn said that car dealers can often fit pollen filters. Other precautions include checking that any medication you take for hay fever is suitable to use if you’re going to drive. And remember that many hay fever remedies cause drowsiness so check the label.

“If you feel a bout of sneezing coming on when you’re driving, slow down - not forgetting to check the mirrors and give a signal if one would be beneficial to other road users. Try pressing hard between your upper lip and nose with your finger.

“That usually delays the sneezing or stops it altogether but keep a box of tissues handy on the passenger seat if you’re alone in the car, just

in case. If there is someone with you, get him or her to hand you a couple of tissues when you feel a bout of sneezing coming on.”

IAM Concerned About New Government Figures

Issued: 8 April 2004

The IAM is very concerned about new Government figures showing accident injuries are down, but fatalities are up. We are also concerned that the rise in the number of fatalities maybe due to an increase in the number of people riding motor cycles.

All motorcyclists can only gain from learning advanced riding skills; a fact that is very well understood by those who come to the IAM to improve their riding skills and their safety. Twenty percent of all those who take the IAM Advanced Test are riders, and just over 12% of our members are motorcyclists.

Last month, the IAM appointed its first Motorcycle Manager to oversee our efforts to improve the safety of this vulnerable section of road users.

Bad Driving Now A Global Health Issue Claims IAM

Issued: 7 April 2004

Better driving would make a major difference to the nation's health claimed the IAM today (7 April 2004) as a World Health Day conference got underway in London.

The conference marks the fact that, for the first time in the history of the World Health Organisation (WHO), World Health Day has been dedicated to road safety.

Welcoming the conference “Safer Roads for Everyone - from WHO to You”, IAM Chief Executive Christopher Bullock hailed the new recognition that road deaths were a global health issue as a breakthrough.

“WHO experts predict that road deaths could be the third biggest killer worldwide by 2020,” said Mr Bullock.

“Road deaths result from crashes, the vast majority of which are preventable. So the conference theme ‘road safety is no accident’ is a good choice,” he said.

“Each and every motorist has it in his or her gift to contribute to their nation's health through better driving standards. That makes bad driving a global health issue as well as a long-term problem for the UK. Whiplash injuries caused by rear-end-shunts, for example, are amongst the most common of road traffic accidents. They don't command many headlines - but they cause misery for thousands.”

Mr Bullock said that such rear-end-shunts alone cost UK plc in the region of £3billion annually,* when medical treatment and time off work are factored in.

The main objectives of World Health Day are:

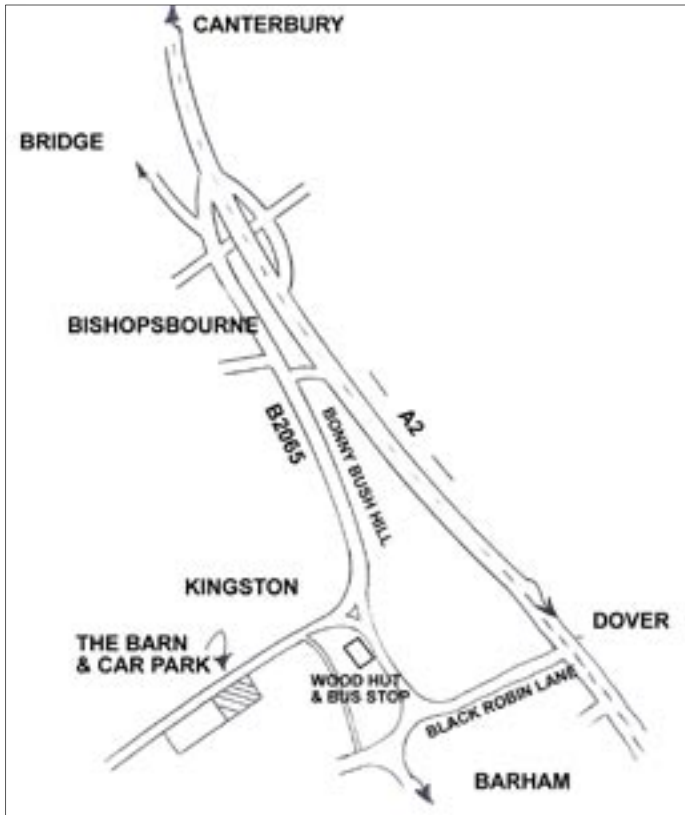
- To raise awareness about the health impact, social and economic costs of Road Traffic Accidents.
- To highlight the particular vulnerabilities of certain groups of road users.
- To issue a call for action to increase efforts to prevent road accidents.

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

PLEASE NOTE: There will be 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.



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 £85. As an Associate member, you will benefit from the Group's activities and have as many observed runs as you need to attain the I.A.M. 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 Sheila Redwood, 01227 462676, she will be able to give you full details, or visit our website at:

<http://www.eastkentiam.org.uk>

New Associates since March 2004

Mr Denis Hickson
 Mr David Dickerson
 Mr Roger Saunders
 Miss Helen Titchner
 Mr Alan Guscott
 Mr Robert Sparks
 Mrs Suzanne Finch
 Mrs Lisa Squirrel
 Mrs Louise Foreman
 Mr Philip Hughes
 Mr Andrew Parsons
 Mr Nigel Gershon
 Miss Naomi Gurney
 Miss Andrea Roberts
 Mr Stephen Conner
 Mr Jonathon Cronk
 Mr Richard Bell
 Mr Douglas Mumford

New Members

Mrs Angela Cobb
 Mr Bart Brown

Events Data

Littlebourne WMH

- Second Thursday - 19.30pm

4 July –The Treasure Hunt is on Sunday, 4th July starting at about 2 p.m. in our car park at Littlebourne. The final destination, although open for liquid refreshment, will not be serving food during the afternoon.

8 July - Tony Regan, a Driving Instructor Trainer

12 August – General Discussion/Open Evening

9 September - Simon Smith of the Kent Fire Brigade in Dover will be coming to talk about Fire Investigation

14 October – AGM, plus guest speaker – Julian Brazier

Test Passes

Period: 09.03.04 - 09.05.04

| Date | Associate | Observer |
|--------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Alistair Robertson | 09/03/04 | Martin Male |
| Vanessa Hogarth | 20/03/04 | Graham Bailey |
| Graham Burney | 21/03/04 | Ron Sims |
| Jane Arthur | 04/04/04 | Nick Williams |
| Gerald Smith | 24/04/04 | Ted Willey |
| Malcom Aspell | 24/04/04 | Ted Willey |
| Kim Hewitt | 01/05/04 | Barrie Bailey |
| Peter Cartwright | 09/05/04 | Richard Hazell |

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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.