

EAST KENT GROUP

Newsletter June 2006



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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.

So much has happened in the few short months since the last newsletter.

If you recall I had been using my sister's mini, (Mini Mack), until such time as I could get my own mini back, (Jock). Well it came due for an MOT whereupon we discovered the rear subframe was in fairly dire straits. Luke, (Pickle) informed us that Terry could fix it, with a screwdriver no less, so we shipped it off to Devon to keep Jock company. When Terry was fitting my new Stage-1 exhaust system he discovered that my rear subframe was also in a less than healthy condition, so Mini Mack's new subframe is now Jock's new subframe, much to my sister's disgust.

Meanwhile, back in Planet Thanet, Mum was buying a new car. Now, when the new BMW Mini's came out there were not many people who complained and moaned louder than Mum. "It's not a proper Mini...", etc. So what did she buy? A Bini Cooper of course, British Racing Green, automatic with manual steptronic paddle thingys and about all the extras that were going, as she seemed to have all the self-control of a small child in a sweet shop.

Where before I got to drive Mum's car all the time, I now don't get a look in. On the rare occasions that I do, I can tell you that for sheer entertainment, road holding, giggle factor - it is a Mini. You find yourself grinning like a loon, and on occasion a small giggle or chuckle escapes you. Being an automatic, it has the feeling of an arcade game, you put your foot down and it's off like a rocket! It is also without doubt the smoothest automatic I have driven and passengered in. You can not feel the gear changes unless you are booting it and it kicks down.

It was left to Mini Mack to break the news to Jock, who took it quite well considering. And Jock? We went down on the Bank Holiday weekend to get him. Sunday saw us flying across Exmoor to Minehead for a little Mini show, and then back on the Coastal route and up Porlock hill. Where before that kind of gradient would have been a major struggle, I now fly with the greatest of ease! I can even get up hills in top gear - an impossibility before if I expected to move at all.

I am now ready - grin firmly in place - to take on this year's Land's End to John O'Groats. We have created a LEJOG Team website this year:
<http://www.blowin-tyres.co.uk>

Please feel free to have a look. There are some pictures from previous years, and if you feel moved to you can now donate online using PayPal. For all of those that have already sponsored us - Thank you very much. We do appreciate your support.

Now Nigel and Sheila have some important news. After their long years of service to the group they are standing down from their committee positions in October. We will need people to replace them if the group is to continue. Please speak to one of the committee members if you feel you can help us move forwards.

NOTE: Our Treasure Hunt is on the evening of the 13th July Social - Start and finish at the Littlebourne Lounge.

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

Do you ever read the Highway Code? I do, a bit. You know the Highway Code: little thin bluey book, pretty pictures of roundabouts, lots of MUST's and MUST NOT's, road signs, etc. I was perusing it only the other day and chanced upon the page of stopping distances. Very useful, especially if you can visualise distances. Unfortunately, I'm not too brilliant on distances - I can do phone numbers and postcodes and a bit of maths - see later - but not visualise distances.

So how long does it take a typical car to stop from 70mph? How many car lengths, how much time? Ditto 60mph, 50, 40 and 30. Distances you probably know, car lengths maybe, times probably not. You don't? Oh, yes you do! Go to the previous page in the Highway Code. There it is: two seconds. ONLY A FOOL BREAKS THE TWO SECOND RULE! Two seconds, that sounds about right. But is it right? Well, let's take the Highway Code figures and make three reasonable assumptions. Firstly, that the "Thinking Distance" is in fact a "Thinking Time" and that it is the same whatever the initial speed, secondly, that you will not start to slow down until the end of the thinking distance, thirdly, when you brake as hard as you can, you shed speed at a constant rate, until you come to a halt. We can work out how long the thinking time is, because we know that at 70mph, the thinking distance is 21 metres. If you do the maths, it takes about two-thirds of a second to travel 21 metres at 70mph (0.6710808 seconds, to be precise). If you do even more maths, it takes nearly five seconds to decelerate from 70 to zero in the space of 75 metres, and at a constant rate. That's nearly five seconds in addition to the two-thirds, making just less than five-and-a-half seconds in total from the legal limit. Bit longer than two seconds, isn't it?

ONLY A FOOL BREAKS THE FIVE-AND-A-HALF SECOND RULE!

At 60mph the total time is just over four seconds, at 50 just over three seconds, at 40 just over two seconds, and at 30 just over one-and-a-half. So, for the two second rule to apply, assuming the figures in the Highway Code to be correct, we have to be driving a bit less than 40 mph! hus, when we are following somebody - most of the time on our overcrowded roads - we might have to say ONLY A FOOL BREAKS THE 40MPH RULE! Interesting. According to the Highway Code, motorbikes and large vehicles need longer distances, and wet weather requires double the distance, so this slows things up even more in traffic. You can, of course, tell that the average motorcyclist recognises this increased stopping distance, by the way they habitually travel slower than four-wheel vehicles!

On a different note, I am going to relinquish my Chairmanship of the Group at the end of the year. I feel it is important to keep the wheels turning, as it were, and that the style of the Group should gradually evolve. I have been in Office for nearly five years now, and have thoroughly enjoyed my time. Over the last year I have been recruited to the ranks of Observing - thank you, Richard Hazell - and it is all gradually falling into place. I hope to continue as an Observer for the foreseeable future. Very satisfying to be responsible for getting somebody up to the required standard, and an excellent way to keep your own driving up to standard, and to continue to think about driving.

I am quite sure there is a Chairman-in-waiting within the Group, even if they don't know it yet!

Happy motoring, Nigel

Wanted, a new Group Secretary

Much as I have enjoyed the position, which has given me the chance to meet and talk with, on and off the phone, lots of very interesting people; and to sort out many and varied interesting situations over the last nine years; I have had enough now and will not be continuing after October, when I reach the ripe old age of three score years and ten. The Group needs new blood to take us forward and that means one, or more, of you out there.

I have fulfilled the jobs of Group Contact/Group Secretary and Group Social/Events Secretary as described in some other groups, which has been fine for me as I was initially only working part-time and more recently have been retired; but these jobs could easily be split as indicated if preferred.

I have prepared a job description and will be more than willing to answer any questions (01227 462676, sheila@eastkentiam.org.uk), but I am definitely stepping down in October, so please consider whether you could take over. I do not propose to disappear altogether and would be willing to continue to serve on the committee if wanted, and also intend to appoint myself official 'Meeter and Greeter'!

Skid Pan

Due to popular demand again, I have provisionally booked two Saturday mornings, 29th July and 12th August. We must have an absolute minimum of six people, preferably nine or even twelve per session, so please let me know, at the latest by 21st June, (as I will be away from 22nd to 27th June and the deadline for confirmation or cancellation will be 28th June) whether you could manage one or preferably both dates. Currently I have four

names: Christine Greig, Les Preston, Alan Hollands and Liz Camp, so could these people let me know, and also anyone else who would like to join in. I am afraid there has been quite a jump in the cost to £41.70 per person, but have to say that the previous cost had remained the same for several years. Please confirm with your cheques payable to 'East Kent Group of Advanced Motorists' to me please.

Our Open Day on 21st May to celebrate 50 years of Advanced Motoring

The weather was not good but could have been a lot worse. Unfortunately only one or two people from the Group apart from Observers and one or two others who had promised to come, turned up and in fact when John and I arrived at midday, the HGV centre looked completely deserted at first glance – not much of a welcome to the public. There were quite a few of these – Richard or Elizabeth can tell you how many – and they had some very successful Assessment drives out and also enjoyed taking part in the Manoeuvring contest which was eventually won by our Chairman, Nigel, with a 17 year old member of the public coming a close second.

My main reason for writing this is to give a big 'thank you' to Richard Hazell who put in a great deal of work to organise the day, on top of his usual workload training up Observers, etc. and thank you to Vic who organized the publicity, Elizabeth and all the Observers who came and helped with what was also supposed to be our Group Manoeuvring day, taking the place of the usual June evening. We very much appreciate the free use of the HGV centre each year.

Sheila

Hidden Dangers on the Road

Daniel Sargent was driving home along the M25 one Sunday in January 1999, a journey he had made countless times without incident. As he came downhill in the fast lane from the Reigate junction, a 12-pound chunk of brake drum fell off a lorry in an inside lane, bounced in the road and crashed straight through his windscreen.

The 48-year-old from Tunbridge Wells, Kent, ducked, but the eight-inch-long lump of metal slammed into his chest with such power that it forced the air out of his lungs. He had just enough strength to stop his car in a straight line and prevent a multiple pile-up before he died at the wheel.

Police described it as a “freak” accident, which puts it in the same category as other tragedies on the roads in recent years: two Norfolk teenagers were killed when the car in which they were travelling swerved to avoid a deer; an England cricketer narrowly avoided death when a worktop blew off a skip lorry and smashed through his windscreen; a young man was killed when a falling tree crushed his sports car on a busy London road.

Though the details of each are unique, these accidents share a common, unsettling theme: the way totally unexpected hazards on, in and around our roads claim innocent lives.

It is estimated that there are at least 150,000 road accidents a year in Britain involving trees, animals and vehicle and other debris. A *Reader's Digest* analysis of government data found that in 2003, such crashes caused some 8,500 injuries and deaths – that's 24 every day. Even scarier, these figures only record when a vehicle

hits an object. They don't reveal how many times drivers and passengers have died after swerving to avoid an object in the road, then crashing.

The number of incidents is alarming but with out-of-the-blue crashes just a small percentage of the 3.4 million accidents, 280,000 injuries and 3,221 road deaths last year, they get scant attention compared with, say, drunk driving. That means the root causes go ignored.

That's starting to change: good news to people like Andrew Howard, head of road safety at the AA Motoring Trust. Looking beyond these accidents' freak nature to tackle recurring causes, he says, can bring down the death toll. “After all, there's only so much a conscientious driver can do.”

ROAD KILL On a summer's evening two years ago, four Norfolk teenagers set off for a quiet evening drive. After stopping off to buy ice cream, they were travelling towards the village of Hempnall when a deer sprang into the road right in front of their grey Peugeot 205. Ben Bygrave, the 17-year-old driver, swerved to avoid the animal, sheering off the road into a tree. Ben pulled 13-year-old Lorna Townsend clear, but Gavin Stamp, 14, died in the wreckage and Gina Ingram was thrown from the car and killed instantly. She was 17, training to be a hairdresser and described as her parents' “beautiful butterfly”.

In an identical accident this summer, five friends were travelling along the A1122 Swaffham Road when a deer leapt out in their path. The silver Citroen Berlingo veered and hit a tree, injuring the driver and three of the passengers – one suffered a broken neck. The fourth, Mark Jones, a 41-year-old father of two, was killed.

Britain has a Bambi problem. The number of deer-vehicle collisions is put at between 30,000 to 50,000 a year – and rising. The deer population has grown significantly in the last 30 years to more than a million and is set to double in the next ten. It's partly the result of increased woodland cover, milder winters and a lack of natural predators.

"The highest concentrations of deer-vehicle collisions occur not in the Highlands of Scotland, as people expect, but in southern England, where higher volumes of traffic coincide with high levels of deer density," says Dr. Jocken Langbein, a wildlife expert who oversees the government-backed National Deer Collisions Project. This is especially so in well-wooded commuter belts: 120 collisions a year have been recorded in Ashridge, Hertfordshire, and 300 in Hampshire – not just in the New Forest, but on the outskirts of towns.

"This is a difficult and frustrating problem," says Chris Charlton, road policing inspector for North Yorkshire, which, in the last 18 months, has seen seven motorcyclists seriously injured in deer crashes. "Wild animals will not be bound by hedges and fences. We have warning signs all over the county but it's impossible to tell drivers where wildlife will appear."

While deer are the principal animal hazard, especially at this time of year when the rutting season makes them more unpredictable, there are other culprits: foxes, pheasants, badgers – and horses.

James and Sheila Balmer were travelling through the Durham countryside on the A1(M) on a November night in 2003 when a horse loomed out of the darkness, galloping straight at them. "There was a

loud bang and a crashing sound – the next thing we were in a field next to some trees and a fence," recalls Sheila. Tragically, her husband James suffered appalling injuries and died in hospital.

Crashes involving four-legged beasts such as horses, cows and deer can be catastrophic, says PC Michael Baxter from Durham police. "They consist of an awful lot of weight on matchstick legs. When a vehicle hits them the matchsticks break and the mass of the animal – nearly a ton for a horse and up to 25 stone for the largest deer – comes through the windscreen."

Experts say better tools are needed to stop these crashes happening. What's not working well are car-mounted whistles that emit an ultrasonic sound that supposedly scares deer. "Deer crossing" signs aren't a lot better; drivers ignore them.

One promising strategy, says David Hooton, deer liaison officer for east Anglia, is to use roadside reflectors to convert a vehicle's headlight beam into a moving "light fence". The unnatural light pattern startles animals into stopping until cars pass. The latest reflectors, about to be trialled in Hertfordshire and Somerset, also emit an audible sound. In tests in Germany they achieved a significant reduction in collisions.

Close to David Hooton's base in The Kings Forest, Suffolk, a lower-tech system has been introduced – a series of rumble strips on the B1106 to encourage drivers to slow down and to make a noise to deter deer from crossing.

He and his colleagues believe, however, that deer-proof fencing, guiding the animals to safer crossing points, is the best

solution. Trials have shown that deer do use “green bridges”, even over the M25, and underpasses, such as those under the A31 dual carriageway in the New Forest. But it’s not cheap. Fencing costs from £10,000 a mile (for one side of the road) and bridges and underpasses ca cost millions.

“Managing” the deer population would reduce the problem, but culling would have to be carried out on a vast scale: an expensive and controversial solution in a nation of animal lovers.

KILLER TREES Matthew Warden’s yellow and black Vauxhall v20 Lightning sports convertible was his pride and joy, but it couldn’t save his life when a tree fell on him as he drove along the Great North Road in Hadley, north London, in January 2003. Eye-witnesses fought to free the 32-year-old from Hertford but the tree was too heavy and by the time rescue services arrived he’d died of crush injuries. Police said a freak wind had blown the tree down.

Instances of trees smashing into moving vehicles and drivers hitting fallen trees are reported regularly in Britain, especially in winter and on rural and suburban roads where trees often line the carriageway. In 2003, 203 people were killed when their vehicle hit a tree.

One of the worst cases was in Kings Heath, Birmingham, in December 1999. Kenneth David, a building contractor, was driving his mother Ellen, 79, to the shops when a 160-year-old ash crashed down on them in high winds. It fell across both carriageways, hitting a Peugeot driven by postman Alan Poole coming in the opposite direction. All three were crushed to death as the 15-ton tree reduced their cars to mangled metal.

An investigation found that this was an accident waiting to happen. Fungus growing on the tree would have alerted a trained arboriculturalist to its dangerous state and tests revealed that 90 per cent of the tree’s roots had rotted away. Yet Birmingham City council, responsible for the tree and many thousands of others, had no system for identifying dangerous trees besits its roads.

In fining the council £150,000 for negligence, Judge Richard Wakerley underlined that “the public require safety as a high priority”. The council has since created an At Risk Tree Register and last year spent £914,500 on the maintenance of its highway trees.

“Following the Birmingham case a lot more councils have woken up to their legal responsibility to inspect thrie trees,” says Judith Osborn, landscape and environment officer at Oxfordshire County Council who, after years of underfunding, now has an annual budget of £300,000 for maintaining and replanting trees.

Typical of councils’ new-found sense of responsibility is the decision by Wandsworth, south London, to fell 250 of its 15,000 trees because of their dangerous condition and to replace them in this winter’s planting cycle.

The Department of Transport has just updated its code of practice for highway maintenance management. The code states that a separate programme of tree inspections should be undertaken by arboricultural advisers for each individual street or mature tree, depending on the risk.

What should they be looking for? “Signs of ill health such as fewer or paler leaves, dead brances, fungi,” says David Rose,

tree pathologist at the Forestry Commission's research station. "If none of these is obvious yet the inspector remains concerned, he should make a more detailed examination, with a fine wire probe pushed into the tree to measure density or with sound generation equipment that gives a picture of what's happening inside the trunk."

Tree care must be seen as a priority. "A big tree weighs tons," says David Rose. "If you collide with a fallen tree, you hit a solid, unyielding object. It's like a high-speed crash with another car. You risk serious injury – or death."

DEADLY DEBRIS On the afternoon of February 15 this year, Robert Croft, the Glamorgan captain and former England cricketer, was driving towards home in his wife's Mitsubishi Shogun on the M4 in South Wales. "As I pulled out to overtake a skip lorry, out of the top came a panel of wood, about six feet by three," he recalls. "It flapped through the air, heading for the centre of the windscreen. I flicked the car to the left; there was a horrific bang, glass went everywhere and the panel flew past my right eye. Somehow I managed to gather myself and pull over to the hard shoulder."

Croft spent the night in hospital and was hampered all season with a sore shoulder but admits he had a lucky escape. Other motorists are less fortunate. Every year, nearly 3,000 people are injured or killed when their vehicle hits a stray object on the highway or a load that has fallen off a lorry.

"Most of these accidents are preventable," says Kevein Delaney, traffic and road safety manager at the RAC Roundation. "The haulage industry does not put enough effort into educating its members. Debris

from trucks is larger and more dangerous than other objects left in the road.

"Truck tyres are one of the worst problems. Because the rear tyres are paired up, one of them can have a puncture and shed chunks of rubber across the road without the driver realising. Drivers and owners need to check tyres to make sure they are correctly inflated."

He adds that diesel spills caused by drivers who overfill tanks contribute to some of the 6,000 deaths and serious injuries among motorcyclists. Local authorities must also take the blame for failing to sweep our roads adequately.

Despite the scale of negligence, barely 1,000 drivers or owners are prosecuted each year for causing danger by dropping debris or running with insecure loads – and most receive paltry fines. According to Andrew Howard, the AA's top safety expert, "A hard-pressed police force is concentrating on the problems that get the most publicity. They chase the speeders and the drunk drivers but have little time to deal with debris dumpers.

"When debris does cause a serious accident and police want to prosecute, they often fail to get a conviction," says Howard. "There is real confusion over the law. Causing debris to fall on the roads is covered by several different Acts and many offences fall between them."

Sometimes, victims can exact more justice by suing. Leading UK law firm Shoosmiths pursues 45,000 personal injury claims a year, most arising from road accidents. In one case, a mother and her two children were all injured when her car collided with concrete slabs that had fallen off a lorry. The only charge brought against the driver

was failing to have insurance and he was let off with a small fine. Now, as a result of her claim, the mother is likely to receive damages of £2,000, says Alan Harrison, a partner at Shoosmiths.

Police forces are, at last, getting help to crack down on debris dumpers. In perhaps the most far-reaching change for decades, the Highways Agency is forming a huge team of civilian traffic officers. One of their duties will be to look for large items of debris on motorways and trunk roads and remove them. Officers have been patrolling in the West Midlands since April last year and in the South East since August. By the end of next year, 1,200 officers, backed by 300 control-room staff, will be helping to keep main roads clear.

And under proposals in the new Road Safety Bill, the government-funded Vehicle and Operator Services Agency will be given powers to fine drivers and owners for failing to secure loads and overloading. At present only the police have these powers and agency inspectors are limited to banning a vehicle from the road.

That's encouraging news for Richard Lochhead, a member of the Scottish Parliament, who came face to face with debris as he drove at 70mph on the A90 dual carriageway south of Aberdeen this summer. "It seemed to be hurtling straight towards me, then hit the radiator of the car and lodged underneath," he says. "I'm lucky I escaped without injury."

The culprit: a steel hub from a passing lorry – a hunk of metal not so different from the one that, six years earlier, killed Danny Sargent.

*Reader's Digest, November 2005
Contributed by Pam Head*

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 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 Sheila Redwood, 01227 462676, sheila@eastkentiam.org.uk she will be able to give you full details, or visit our website at:

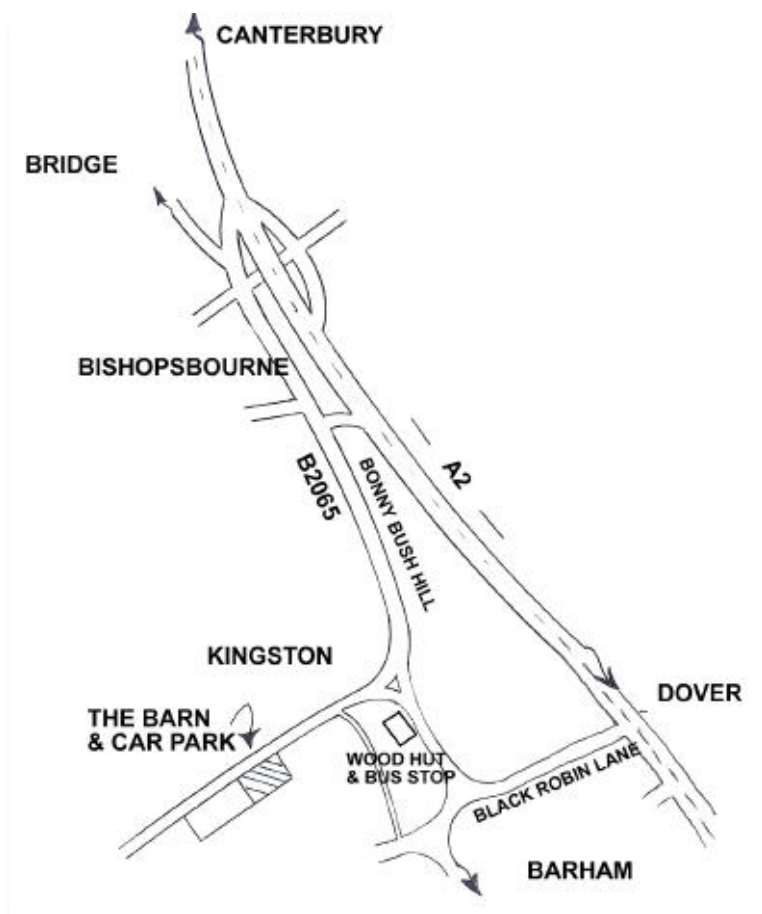
<http://www.eastkentiam.org.uk>

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

PLEASE NOTE: There 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.



New Associates since the last update

Mr Artiff Shuman
 Mr Alan Harris
 Mr Colin Reeves
 Mr David Pierce
 Mrs Julie Pierce
 Dr Stephen Serjeant
 Mrs Melanie Bowen
 Mr Dean Mclnerney
 Mrs Tina Brown
 Mr Leonard Wilson

Members

Mr Roger Chapman

Events Data

Littlebourne War Memorial Hall
 - Second Thursday - 19.30pm

8 June - Cliff East - MOD Fire Training
13 July - Treasure Hunt. Start and finish at the Littlebourne Lounge.
10 August - Quiz/Open evening
14 Sept - Our two resident Optometrists
12 October - AGM. Dr. Stephen Ladyman, MP, Transport Minister
9 November - Unconfirmed
14 December - Our Christmas social

Test Passes

Period:

11.02.06 - 21.05.06

Associate	Date	Observer
Ian Davison	11.02.06	Alan Hollands
Luke McConnell	17.02.06	John Nye
Jonathan Arnold	25.02.06	Richard Blackford
Justin Harlow	25.02.06	Brian Hodgkins
Mark Sinclair-Watson	18.03.06	Ron Sims
Les Preston	21.03.06	Richard Hazell
Thomas Wilson	03.04.06	Nigel Cooke
Brian Warren	09.04.06	Trevor Brown
Elizabeth Camp	11.04.06	Alan Hollands
Richard Young	22.04.06	Ted Willey
Paul Allen	29.04.06	Ted Willey
Mark Moorhouse	21.04.06	Philip Plant
Ian Stewart	21.05.06	Philip Plant

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

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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.