

EAST KENT GROUP

Newsletter March 2009

IAM

DRIVING ROAD SAFETY



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Keith Watson	COMMITTEE MEMBER (co-opted Jan 2009)	
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Richard Meadows	PUBLICITY (ex-officio)	
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If you need to contact any of the above, please do so before 10 PM.
Should the person you require not be available, please contact any other member who will deal with your enquiry or pass on your message as soon as possible.

For the first time in years I wintered on motorbike while Mini Jock rested his SORNed tyres snug in his little mini shaped cover. Having the right equipment is absolutely essential. After feeling like my head was being chopped off at the neck by the wind I invested in a wind stopper neck tube. Fantastic. But what about my hands? Ride for more than a couple of minutes and all you can think about, pretty much to the exclusion of everything else, is how cold your hands are, how much pain, how to get them warm.... Not conducive to a safe driving experience. The solution? Heated Handlebar grips and muffs!

I don't know why it took me so long to get these ingenious devices fitted. Even in the most bitter weather, the ride can be almost enjoyable. The grips get so hot I have to turn them down, and I would arrive at my destination with bright red, toasty paws. Now all my attention can be focused on the ride and the adrenaline rush of those loose wheeled moments.

It's quite funny, but I now have more effective heating on motorbike than I do in my car. It leads me to wonder if there is such a thing as heated steering wheels....

Already the roads are getting slightly more grip and I am looking forward to the better weather, (ever the optimist), to enjoy those rides with less loose moments. Of course, it is now more an exercise in pot hole dodging than ever before, but after a driving career spent primarily in Mini's and on motorbikes with a very occasional sojourn to comfortable cars, it is a skill that is second nature!

It has just come to my attention that I did not update the test passes in the last newsletter. This has now been remedied, and I apologise to those that were left out.

This is what comes of working late at night I suppose. No matter how vigilant you are, there comes a point where your brain shuffles off to bed and leaves you floundering around wondering what happened to your ability to think straight!

So saying, I will now bid you farewell!
I hope everyone has a good Easter.

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*

The weather is interesting on several fronts (weather fronts, maybe?). Quite apart from the subject itself, which I find worthy of study in a superficial kind of way, it can be an icebreaker (there I go again!), allowing us to start a conversation, and then get on to what we really want to say. It is also very relevant to the way we drive, both while it is happening - apparently now to be called "adverse weather events" and "snow events" - and afterwards. If the climate-change gurus are to be believed, we will all have to get used to a lot more volatile weather conditions, with the driving challenges that brings. As is the way of things, we will expect to continue to drive whatever the weather.

At the time of writing, we seem to be having quite a lot of these weather events, and these test our driving expertise. We have safer cars these days, with crumple zones, ABS, traction controls, etc., allowing us an air of invulnerability, all very nice for getting us out of trouble. But should we let ourselves get in trouble in the first place? Surely, we should not drive in such a way that we rely on all this safety stuff, especially the crumple zones! It is not unusual for tales of driving derring-do to emerge in general conversation, and these will often include references to "the ABS getting me out of trouble", or something similar, as if this were a badge of honour. In some of our recent snow events, I have seen drivers apparently oblivious to the much greater safety gaps required, following nearly as closely as they would in good conditions, which in itself was too close anyway. No doubt the belief is that the ABS will come to the rescue. If you look in the Highway Code at the stopping distances at different speeds, you can work out the stopping times which may be an easier concept to grasp, and at 70 mph this works out to 5 seconds. It is about 2

seconds at 30 mph. So the two second rule should really become a three-or-more second rule for the open road. The stopping times and distances are obviously more in the wet, and a lot more in the snow.

So, once the snow and ice clear away, everything goes back to normal, right? Wrong. Next time you are out driving, check on the road surface very carefully. There are holes in it, proper holes, sometimes six inches across and four inches deep, enough to do your suspension, tyres and back no good at all. I was on a B road the other day, and the nearside edge of the carriageway had lost huge chunks of tarmac, maybe two feet by six inches, by four inches deep. Think what that could do. I foresee these holes being repaired but possibly not too soon. Please be especially vigilant.

On this happy note, drive carefully,

Nigel

In May we intend to run an Observer Training Course. This short course is designed to give you the necessary skills to prepare an associate for the Advanced Driving Test.

This Course will lead, after passing and Observer Test, to a Qualified Observer Certificate.

Observers are the very backbone of the IAM so your help would be much appreciated.

For further information please telephone 01843 224123.

Observers' Day

At Kingston on Sunday 28th June we will be having an Observers' Day. From 9am to 4pm observers are invited to 'drop-in' - meet other observers, go on runs with one another and exchange views on observing practice.

This will be the first time we have held such a day and your attendance and views will be much appreciated.

*Chief Observer
Alan Hollands*

As I sit writing this, I am dreaming of Spring! The weather is certainly milder and, when walking Harry (our Westie) in the mornings, the birds seem to be twittering more. Harry has decided that he loves muddy puddles and heads into them whenever he can. Recently he dashed into one that was deeper than he expected and found himself immersed up to his tummy, he was so shocked that he stood still for a couple of seconds then jumped out and wouldn't go near another one on that particular walk! He seems to have got over that mishap but does take a little extra care before committing himself now.

Now to business. I am delighted to report that we have two new Committee Members. At our January meeting we welcomed Peter Denham and Keith Watson and co-opted them onto the Committee pending formal nomination for the October AGM. Your services will be greatly appreciated boys!

Whilst talking about meetings, we have decided to try and structure our social gatherings a bit better. We will congregate between 7.30 and 7.45 with the 'housekeeping bits' (presentations etc) taking place at 7.45 and the speaker/event kicking off at 8.00. A break for refreshments/raffle at 8.45 and completion of the talk with questions at 9.00. Close and departure between 9.30 and 9.45. Obviously the timings must be subject to 'give and take' but, hopefully, with more of a planned timescale we will benefit.

Professor Cyril Isenberg gave us a fascinating insight into Bubbles in February. I never knew Fairy Liquid could be so interesting but somehow I can't get the different shapes he made with my daily washing up!

This month (12th) we have Ben Crosswell speaking to us. Ben, who is of course a serving police officer, came on the scene last year as a new Examiner and I know he has carried out a lot of Advanced Tests in our area. Having recently become a new father, I am sure he will have a lot to tell us! If, for any reason, Ben can't make the March meeting, Vic Reynolds will host a quiz for us. The quiz will take place in April if all goes to plan. I am currently sorting out our speaker for May but don't forget that June will be the usual Manoeuvring Competition at the HGV Centre at Hersden – between Sturry and Thanet on the A28. Meet from 7pm onwards.

Finally, I am pleased to confirm two dates for SKID PAN experiences. These are the mornings of 9th and 16th May from 9am to 1pm.

The cost will be £47.15 per hourly session. Those of you who have been before will remember that there are usually three to a car which gives you 15-20 minutes behind the wheel, the remainder of the hour long session being in tuition and sitting behind the person behind the wheel. (The cost per hour is £141.45 so if two people wish to share an hour that can be arranged.) If you would like to take advantage of the Skid Pan event, please write to me at 2 Barn Tye Close, Guston, Dover, Kent, CT15 5ND with your cheque for £47.15. I regret that I cannot confirm any places until cheques have been received. It will be first come, first served so don't delay in getting your cheques to me as this is a popular event.

Congratulations to Alan Simmons who won a free place in the draw of email addresses – you are first on the list Alan.

I think that's all from me for this edition, Happy Easter to all.

Vanessa

Keep up to date!

If you would like to be kept up to date with arrangements for our monthly Social meetings, or indeed receive any information that may be of interest to you, why not send an e-mail to events @ eastkentiam.org.uk. I will add your e-mail address to a list and send you a message with the relevant details.

Vanessa

EGM Notification

Notice is hereby given that an Extraordinary General Meeting of the East Kent Group of Advanced Motorists will be held in the Lounge of the Littlebourne War Memorial Hall, Littlebourne on Thursday 9 April 2009 at 7.30pm.

This is to approve an increase, to £31, to our Associate Membership fee in order to keep in line with the IAM's increase in the Skill for Life fee. It will, in fact, only affect a very few number of Associates who need to renew their Associate Membership in order to continue preparing for the Advanced Test after their initial year.

All Members, Associates and Friends are invited to attend but only fully paid up Members of the IAM and of the Group may make proposals and/or vote.

**By order of the Group Committee
V P Norley, Group Secretary
18 February 2009**

Message from the Ambulance Service

We all carry our mobile phones with names & numbers stored in its memory. If we were to be involved in an accident or were taken ill, the people attending us would have our mobile phone but wouldn't know who to call. Yes, there are hundreds of numbers stored but which one is the contact person in case of an emergency? Hence this 'ICE' (In Case of Emergency) Campaign.

The concept of 'ICE' is catching on quickly. It is a method of contact during emergency situations. As mobile phones are carried by the majority of the population, all you need to do is store the number of a contact person or persons who should be contacted during emergency under the name 'ICE' (In Case Of Emergency). The idea was thought up by a paramedic who found that when he went to the scenes of accidents there were always mobile phones with patients but they didn't know which number to call.

He therefore thought that it would be a good idea if there was a nationally recognised name for this purpose.

In an emergency situation, Emergency Service personnel and hospital Staff would be able to quickly contact the right person by simply dialling the number you have stored as 'ICE'.

Please forward this. It won't take too many 'forwards' before everybody will know about this. It really could save your life, or put a loved one's mind at rest.

For more than one contact name simply enter ICE1, ICE2 and ICE3 etc.

PLEASE PASS THIS AROUND AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE AS THIS CAN HELP IN AN EMERGENCY

Submitted by Elizabeth Cooper

Here are a few signs seen 'Down Under' while travelling in various coaches.

We particularly liked 'Passing Lane (say) 600 metres ahead', as it obviously avoided drivers getting frustrated at being unable to pass on very long journeys.

- Keep Left Unless Passing.
- It's not a target. Drive to the Conditions.
- Drink Drive, Die in a Ditch.
- Be Patient - Don't be a Patient.
- Slowing Down Won't Kill you.

and on a boarding about Boat Houses - Aircraft Quality at Submarine Prices.

Submitted by Sheila Redwood

A PHYSICIST WRITES...

January 2009

As I drive along, I do try to notice and make sense of anything unusual (which, after all, is how these columns often first take shape!). But there's something I became aware of only gradually, last year. I'm referring to the blue signs that you now see every few hundred yards along motorways, and on some other roads too I believe.

When I first observed them, their message looked to me like some private code for use by the highway authorities, and so I paid little attention to them. Then I noticed that the bottom number varied like a measurement of distance. But it changed too much, from one sign to the next, to be in miles. Finally I realized it was measuring kilometres — which makes it surely the

most blatant example of imposed metrication across the country (except for measuring temperatures in Celsius, not that I object to this).

Hunting for an explanation of these ubiquitous markers, I found one at the very end of the 2007 edition of *Know Your Traffic Signs*, almost a footnote: “They show the motorway or road number, the carriageway identifier and a distance reference. In the event of a vehicle breakdown or other emergency, the exact location can be identified quickly.” Well, how about that! Couldn’t these Driver Location Signs, as they are called, have been announced rather more widely? Certainly I’ve never seen publicity for them, though you might have expected plenty if they were being installed for general use (and at considerable cost too, no doubt).

So I looked at them harder and investigated them further. At the top of the sign is a reminder of the motorway number: apparently, not all drivers phoning the emergency services can remember which road they are on. The second line consists of just one letter, usually A or B. On motorways radiating out from London, A marks the outward carriageway and B the returning one. On the M25, A takes you clockwise and B anti-clockwise. I’m not sure what the rule is elsewhere. Other letters are used on slip-roads.

And then below this we get the ‘distance reference’ — a number that can run into the hundreds, and which ends with a digit after the decimal point. Now if the authorities insist, I am prepared to accept that this distance (from wherever it’s measured) is indeed accurate to the nearest 0.1 km. But aren’t the decimal point and that final digit rather likely to hinder you, as you desperately try to remember and report the

whole location code when phoning the emergency services? It would have been better if more of the signs had been placed exactly on the kilometre!

In fact, according to the Highways Agency website, Driver Location Signs were introduced mainly to assist passengers (and, I suppose, hands-free drivers) in reporting incidents by mobile phone without needing to stop. But did you know that if you do have to stop in emergency, you will actually find the decimal distance (with its decimal digit printed below the whole number) on every marker post?

That was another surprise to me. I knew the posts were 100 metres apart and had some sort of identification on them, but I had no idea that they already calibrated our motorways, kilometre by exact kilometre (and have done so for 30 years). The puzzle is why the Highway Code still advises you to trudge to the nearest emergency telephone rather than use your mobile — though admittedly the telephone does transmit its location automatically for you.

As for the distances themselves, it seems they are measured either from the start of the motorway or from the centre of town (eg, London), whichever is more appropriate. It’s understandable, perhaps, that the two carriageways are always measured from the same end, though the result is that on the ‘B’ side the decimal number decreases (rather confusingly, would you agree?) as you drive onwards. But you would have thought that the anti-clockwise circuit of the M25, at least, could have been measured in its own direction. What I really want to know, though, is whether the marker posts on the M25, striding out in parallel from somewhere near Dartford, were allowed by the

constructors to get progressively out of step between the two carriageways, because of the difference in their circumference!

At 70 mph it's not easy to investigate this, so let's suppose the motorway is on average 35 metres wide, including the hard shoulders. Then the outer (clockwise) hard shoulder ought to be just over 200 metres or 0.2 km longer than the inner one, regardless of the diameter of the motorway and how it twists as it circumnavigates London. Now if someone happens to be visiting Thurrock (where the M25 'ends', before crossing the Thames labelled the A282) and could find time to examine the motorway and check on this...

While getting to grips with the blue signs, I came across the official Traffic Signs Manual. Aimed at councils and other bodies responsible for road signs, it contains a huge amount of advice, mostly sensible. For example, each of those 'priority' signs with the pair of vertical arrows — the round sign (give way to oncoming traffic) and the rectangular one (go for it!) — is accompanied by a warning: Must never be used upside down in an attempt to imply reversed priority. Good, I find these signs confusing enough as it is, when I'm in a hurry.

Left-to-right reversal is allowed for particular signs, of course. Even the bicycle-in-a-triangle may be printed either way round, to warn you of cyclists emerging from whichever side of the road is more likely than the other. I wish you luck, though, in noticing and making sense of that subtle difference, at speed.

Peter Soul, Thames Valley Group

Drivers now need grit - not just salt - for bad weather, says IAM

The IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) has put together an at-a-glance guide to driving and riding in adverse weather, to help the estimated six million drivers who are now facing the worst driving conditions in a generation.

IAM Chief Examiner Peter Rodger, one of the UK's most qualified drivers, said: "Blame for some of the problems may focus on the lack of salt - but a lack of grit on the part of many drivers also led to difficulties, especially on side roads up and down the UK.

"In the last week, poorly prepared drivers and vehicles have ended up stranded by driving conditions that for which they had little or no experience.

"Blizzards and strong side winds are predicted, with more snow and ice, plus the inevitable local flooding that follows. These would challenge even experienced drivers," said Mr Rodger. Drivers in different parts of the UK will be combating a range of treacherous driving conditions for days to come.

Mr Rodger echoed police warnings that even though the first snow has gone, it doesn't mean that the roads are safe again.

The IAM said that five main things drivers should be aware of are when facing the full range of the British winter are:

FRESH SNOW – get your speed right (not too fast to lose control, and not too slow to risk losing momentum); create lots of room around you and do everything smoothly – braking, steering, accelerating. Start gently from stationary, avoiding high revs.

HEAVY RAIN – watch for the shiny patches that are lying water; give yourself a longer gap to other traffic, and be ready to slow down when you need to; keep the demister working; don't soak pedestrians by running through puddles .

FLOODING – lower your speed right down and choose the most shallow route available , using the middle of the road if that's where it is and you can do so. Use a low gear to keep revs high but control speed by slipping the clutch (and beware that water could enter the exhaust, so keep the revs up).

FOG – the lead vehicle in a queue will clear pockets of fog, potentially deceiving vehicles following that the conditions are clearer than they are. Don't use full beam. Use wipers on the outside and the demister inside to keep your visibility as clear as possible.

HIGH WINDS – give yourself more space, with plenty of distance between you and the vehicle in front; take particular care when passing large vehicles and motorcycles, and be ready for side winds at gaps in buildings or as you come out of a cutting. Cyclists are particularly vulnerable to side winds

*IAM Press Release
10 February 2009*

About Us

How can the Group help me?

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

How much does it cost?

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

How does the Group Operate?

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

How do I join the Group?

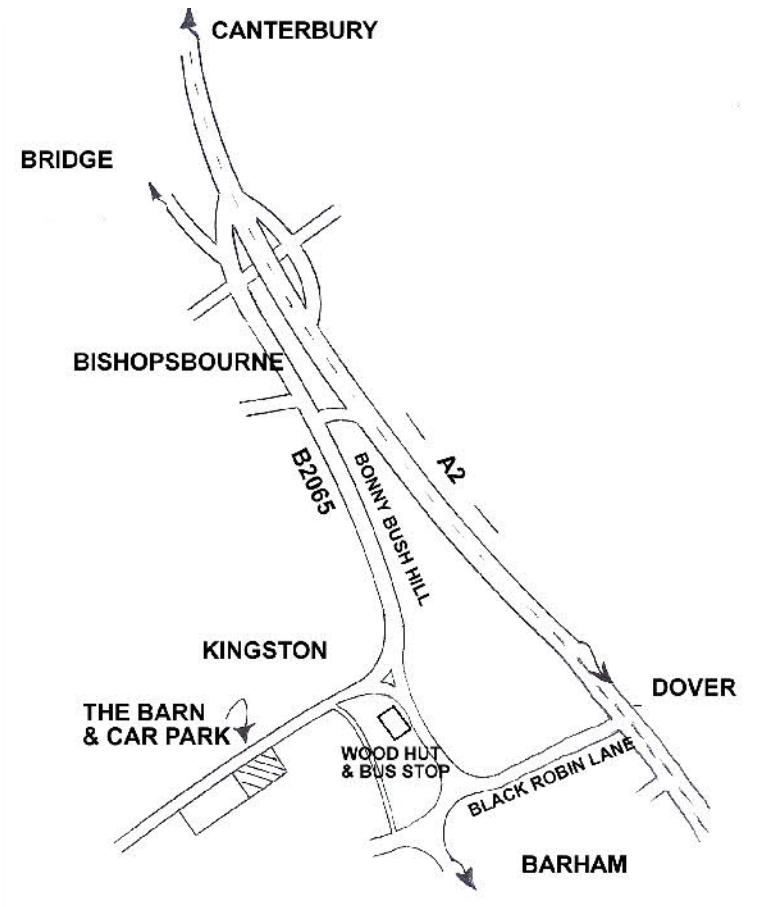
If you contact Mrs Vanessa Norley, 01304 215168, she will be able to give you full details, or visit our website at: <http://www.eastkentiam.org.uk>

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

PLEASE NOTE: There is no session in January.

To find 'The Barn', Kingston:

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



New Associates since the last update

Jane Martin
 Steven Ross
 Barnaby Crush
 Jonathan Wells
 Jerry Blenford
 Anne Mangan
 Simon Ferrar
 Paul Beechey
 Roger Pitt
 Michael Stace

New Members

Philip Rogers

Events Data

Littlebourne War Memorial Hall
 - Second Thursday - 19.30pm

12th March - Ben Crosswell, serving
 Police Officer

9th April - Quiz Evening

14th May - To Be Confirmed

11th June - Manoeuvring Evening,
 Hersden HGV Centre. (7pm onwards)

Test Passes

Period:

19.05.08 - 29.01.09

Associate	Date	Observer
David Paine	19.05.2008	Ian Davison
Richard Shepherd	31.07.2008	Ron Sims
Rebecca Lancaster	19.08.2008	Jane Clarke
Sally Amos	29.08.2008	Vanessa Norley
Robert Knowles	29.09.2008	Trevor Cobb
Craig Cliff	29.10.2008	Vanessa Norley
Keith Watson	29.10.2008	Ted Willey
Donald Parish	15.11.2008	Martin Male
Tania Dunning	18.11.2008	Eric Gowler
Peter Denham	22.11.2008	--
Nigel Holden	08.12.2008	Ted Willey
Paul Harriman	29.01.2009	Graham Bailey

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

Final Copy Date for June Submission - 14 May 2009

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