

EAST KENT GROUP

Newsletter March 2010

IAM

DRIVING ROAD SAFETY



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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.

I have had few good rides this week, which heralds the end the bad weather, and the start of the better weather. I could at least lean the bike a bit anyway, which I haven't been doing too much off recently. I love this time of year on the bike. You have weathered the winter, and hopefully survived in tact. But that first dry road, clear day, (sun optional), and you remember why you love riding a bike! The winter is more an exercise in survival - the rest of the time is just out and out fun.

Speaking of fun - the work on Mini Jock continues apace - he is now all welded and though looked slightly sorry for himself - his engine roared into life when we went to see him the other day. The lad from the garage was sat on a tyre to drive him, but I guess you make do when there are no seats or interior to speak of....

He's heading for the spray booth next and will look all spiffy with his new do. I have got some nice new shiny wheels and bumpers. I suppose I did the typical girly thing, and bought new shoes before anything else was done. But they really are very nice wheels! They did also mention that he will probably be slower now that his bodywork consists of considerably more metal than this time last year, but I think they were joking.... Probably.

A good friend loaned me the use of a car through the winter months when the weather was decidedly not bike friendly. An M reg pug with no power steering, stereo or heating. It definitely has the personality of a Mini. I got a lot better at parking right the first time, as without power steering it can be exhausting to mess it up! It is quite tragic when you are in fact warmer on a motorbike than in a car. I was very grateful that I had the car though on the few slitherly occasions I experienced.

On more group oriented matters, we're still on the look out for a new Group Secretary. The group can't function without one, so we really need your help!

We're also finally giving the website an overhaul. It is looking very dated now, so the time has come to give it a bit of a facelift and spring clean - appropriate for this time of year I guess!!

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

Sometimes, in my more lucid moments, I can remember things that happened a fair while ago, like when Barack Obama came to the throne, when cars had chokes, and when I last did the washing-up. Through the mists of time, when I look back to my formative years, when I was even shorter than I am now, the family used to go on long car journeys of at least an hour. More often than not, my younger brother and I fell to squabbling in the back seat of the car, and in order to prevent one or other of us falling out the door - no child locks in those days - my mum would get us counting cars of different colours, or looking for the lowest or highest number on a number plate, or looking for all the Hillmans (Hillmen?), and so on. The point is, we started to look at other cars and what they were doing.

It's a habit I've never lost. In my grown-up, responsible citizen version, I look at other drivers and opine as to their driving skills: are both hands on the wheel, are they talking to their passenger with their head turned towards them, how fast are they going, are they in the right place on the road, can they stop safely, are they going to hit me, how many of them have obviously had some extra driving training? Of course, you don't have to be in a vehicle to watch this all happening, you could just be pedestrianising along the pavement.

I must admit, I was somewhat out of practice with the pedestrian version of the game, but I've brushed up my skills very smartly this last snowy winter, as the shoe-leather has had a lot more use, and the car has had no unnecessary outings. I've had to invent the special Dancing on Ice or Torvill and Dean category. This became very popular over the winter, with participants doing pirouettes on the ice, often at the wheel of a large white van. I

suppose we should not be too surprised. I imagine a sizeable proportion of more recent drivers have little experience of driving in snowy and icy conditions, at least here in the south east. The same drivers have grown up with ABS, and probably traction control, and maybe believe these will increase grip and save them from themselves. But it's that little patch of rubber on each corner that has the last say. If that doesn't grip then you're heading for the hedgerows!

So what's the answer? It is, at least in part, as a previous Prime Minister once said, "Education, education, education." It would surely include: "Practice, practice, practice.", and it absolutely must include: "Observation, observation, observation." This is beginning to look suspiciously like keeping your driving skills up to scratch with the IAM, of course! And, what else? A spare set of wheels, complete with winter tyres, which really do dramatically improve grip in snow and ice, slashing braking distances and improving traction, while still behaving tolerably in non-winter conditions. Goodbye Torvill and Dean. It works in Germany, so why not here? Mind you, most things work in Germany.

Now, let's think for a minute, when DID I last do the washing-up?

Happy motoring,

Nigel

As I write this, it is sunny but certainly not warm. I'm sure we are all waiting for Spring and the warmer weather with baited breath – will they forecast another 'barbecue summer' I wonder? Hope not, it all goes wrong when they do that!

Sadly, we had to cancel our meeting scheduled for 11th February due to some awful weather. We were due to enjoy another quiz from Vic Reynolds and this will now take place later in the year. Some of you often ask why we always sign in for our social evenings, those of you who I managed to contact on that day now know! It does help us to know who the regulars are and, in the event of any problems, we can let you know.

We certainly had a variety of speakers during 2009, four Group members, Alan Hollands, Steve Green, Steve Hyde and Joe Rumble talked about Driving DVDs, being a Paramedic, the building of the Channel Tunnel bridges and a 'Lifetime of Cars' respectively. Doctor Isenberg enthralled us with 'Bubbles' and rounded off the year with a 'Journey through the Solar System', Vic did his Quiz with a difference and we had talks from Kent Air Ambulance, St John's Ambulance and Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership and IAM Examiner Ben Crosswell. The schedule for 2010 is already well underway and the current list is in its usual spot at the back of this Newsletter.

Here is something for you to consider:

WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR GROUP MEMBERSHIP FREE FOR A YEAR?

Just get someone signed up to do the Skill for Life Course with us and we will cover your next Group Membership subscription. For more information, or if you would like me to send details to someone you know, either telephone me on 01304 215168 or email me secekgiam@hotmail.com

SIMPLE!



We are currently having our Group Rules reprinted, if you would like an up to date copy please contact me (details above) and I will arrange for one to be sent to you. I hope you will take time to read the notice sent with this Newsletter, it does seem that there is no one out there willing to take on the role of Group Secretary but maybe there will be someone with a little time spare to share the duties with me. Your Group really does need you!

I look forward to seeing you at various events during 2010.

Vanessa

Chris Gilbert

At the 'Barn', Kingston, on Sunday 2nd May, Chris Gilbert will be spending the day with us to assess observers and associates' driving. If you would like to be assessed by one of the country's top instructors/examiners, please telephone the number below.

If, as we expect, this day will be over subscribed, places will be allocated by ballot.

Telephone: 01843 224 123

Observer Training Course

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 Training Test.

This course will lead, after passing an 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.

*Chief Observer
Alan Hollands*

A Physicist Writes...

January 2010

I like to think I am tidy-minded. I try to keep my to-do lists in neat piles — and the same goes for the paperwork on the floor that some of the lists refer to. Then in the corner there's a box of various broken items, waiting to be glued back together. Next to it are several boxes containing things out of our old kitchen that we can't find space for in the newly installed one, even though it's bigger!

On the other hand, in the garage are some of the old kitchen cupboards which, when I've put them up in the utility room, will enable ... that's the trouble, everything's connected. The trick is to identify the job that makes other jobs easier, and get on with it.

But first I have a column to write. As I was saying: I'm tidy-minded. And I keep remembering that there's a story left unfinished from last year. Back in April, Richard Porter [Thames Valley Group Newsletter Editor] wrote some strong words about the increasing amount of hatching you see laid down on the left-hand side of the road on the approach to roundabouts and junctions: it's quite a distraction, just when you are trying to cope with a hazard, it narrows the road unnecessarily, and it forces you into a tighter turn. But (he said) driving across the hatching isn't illegal.

Often the hatching has a solid white-line border, which you might think would make it a no-go area. Yet as I pointed out here in June, the Highway Code neatly avoids referring to this particular marking. Where the border is broken, the Code states that you may drive over the hatching provided it's necessary and safe to do so.

But my nose was sniffing for a clear answer to the question of the solid line — especially as I've sometimes seen such hatching almost worn away by the quantity of traffic that plainly does cross it! Also, there's a long stretch of this hatching (on the left, behind a solid line) locally, which I try hard to keep off. But what's the legal position if, approaching the end of it, I cut the corner (accidentally or deliberately)?

The book *Know your Traffic Signs* ought to tell us ... certainly it has a diagram of a one-way road (a slip road, for example) with solid-border hatching against the right kerb, indicating that the road becomes narrower ahead. And the hatching is labelled forbidden territory. But the book makes no mention of it on the left-hand side of the road.

By the way, this tale is all about simple hatching, not chevrons as laid between parallel lanes of merging or separating traffic. Anyway, hot on the scent I looked next at the official *Traffic Signs Regulations* (available on the internet, like anything else these days). The diagrams there were clear enough, being much the same as in *KYTS* — but interpreting the actual regulations was beyond me.

It was time to consult some experts, first the IAM Chief Examiner, Peter Rodger. As I reported in June, his advice to me was simple: if a road marking has a solid border, you must not cross it. He admitted, however, that highway authorities are "not always hugely careful about the exactness of markings..."

But the question was still on my mind, so I sent an e-mail to the Department for Transport. Back came a reply from a lady who explained the regulations on road markings to me most convincingly. A key

section in them is a list of references to all the diagrams of markings that you must not drive over.

She pointed out that this list doesn't include the diagram of hatching with a solid border on the right of your lane (marked as forbidden in *Know your Traffic Signs*, see above), hence crossing this isn't an offence. Well, that's a big surprise — but I wanted to know about when the hatching is on the left, behind a solid line. Said the lady: this appears not to be prescribed or described in the regulations at all (except when it's at the end of a motorway hard shoulder). She suggested contacting a highway authority and asking them what it means.

Our authority is Wokingham Borough Council. Here's the gist of the answer that came back from them: the main reasons for hatching at junctions are to narrow them visually and induce drivers to slow down. It's a good method of non-intrusive traffic calming [try telling that to our Richard Porter!]. Your local stretch of hatching on the left with a solid line accords with Diagram 1040.3 in the *Regulations* [not so: that's specifically for hatching on the right (which, I am reliably informed, one may cross)] — and is unavailable to traffic [OK, I agree this is what the diagram says, but what does it mean?]. Legally, the markings tie in with the *Regulations* [no, they DON'T].

I replied politely with my objections to all this, but heard nothing further. It seems as if something has given local councils the idea of laying down hatching on the left here, there and everywhere, and often painting it with a solid border to warn us right off, even though there appears to be no legal justification for it.

At least hatching with a broken line gets a mention in the Highway Code, as I said. As for this other sort, I predict that the DfT will soon notice that it has spread across the country, realize the regulations don't cover it, quietly put a diagram of it (on the left) into the next update, and include both diagrams (left and right) in the 'must-not-cross' list, of course. Finally, solid-border hatching will appear as a prohibition in the Highway Code: one more set-back for drivers?

I might mention that this story was not written in just a single session of keyboard-tapping. Every so often Mrs S has whispered "cupboard!" in my ear — with the result that we have managed to complete that job too, including emptying the several boxes. Next: where did I last see the Araldite...?

February 2010

In a department store the other day, I almost fell over as I stepped on to a stationary escalator. I could see it wasn't moving, but I was unable to shake off the expectation (deeply ingrained in my brain, no doubt) that my foot would be carried forward. And then the climb up the steep escalator seemed so much more taxing than going up an ordinary flight of stairs would have been!

This has set me thinking of other expectations and habits that might trip us up. Perhaps because of the snowy January weather as I write, the one that occurs to me first is the assumption that if you hit the brakes, your vehicle will stop. I can only recall two occasions, up to 2006, when this didn't happen for me. Luckily no damage resulted. You instinctively feel, though, that it's the brakes that are failing rather than the tyre grip, hence all you can do is press

harder still — which won't improve your chances of recovering control!

But why 2006, you ask. That was the year I went on a skid-pan course (as I reported here). It was a morning of sliding on the straight and on bends, losing grip at the front and at the rear (or both), all great fun but with a serious purpose: to learn what to do and not do in a skid. But four years later, can I still expect to get it right if I face a sudden slide? Maybe it's time for another visit to the pan...

Here's a habit I observed while staying with a friend last year and being driven by him around the countryside: on gentle downhill stretches of road, he would slip out of gear and coast. This was in a nearly new car that had replaced a much older one.

Cautiously I raised the subject. My friend said he had long been doing it, as he found it relaxing and it saved fuel. I said: OK, in neutral the petrol is only being consumed at 'tick-over flow-rate', but if you simply lift your foot in gear, I believe modern engines cut the fuel off completely. But I wasn't certain and his driver's manual didn't say, so I fear I didn't convince him.

I am better informed now: in nearly all fuel-injected engines, petrol is indeed cut off 'on the overrun' (ie, in gear with your foot off the accelerator), above a certain engine speed at least. So coasting out of gear is wasteful. There are safety reasons for not doing it, too: an emergency could call for sudden acceleration — and while re-engaging gear, you would only have one hand on the wheel. Alternatively, you might need to steer and brake heavily simultaneously, and as both systems are servo-assisted by the engine, I wonder if it would fully cope with the demand when running only at tick-over speed? Anyhow,

you can't claim to be in full control of the vehicle when coasting, as required by the law (also, you would fail any driving test).

But why didn't my friend's manual refer to the cut-off feature? My informant in the industry says it is just one of many clever things built into cars now, and owners wouldn't want to read about all their complexities. Also, manufacturers tend to be cautious with their advice on how to drive, in case it isn't applied sensibly.

Several of those clever features are there to help keep you safe, in one way or another. But let's suppose that you've exceeded their capabilities and a crash is inevitable. In the couple of seconds before it happens, you think to yourself: well, in the old days I would soon be flying towards the steering-wheel and the windscreen — at least now I can expect my seat-belt and air-bag to protect me.

But only up to a point. Remember that you still have to be slowed down by something, and a locked-up seatbelt is designed not to possess much 'give' (correctly so: it's this, plus the concertinaing of the car, plus the softness of your body, that allow you yourself the maximum time for deceleration). So in a sudden impact, don't hope to escape bruising or even fractures. Or burst ear-drums from the air-bag.

I remember reading somewhere that a driver had come to grief (or maybe just nearly so) by misjudging the distance of a pair of oncoming headlights at night. He assumed they belonged to a car, but in fact they were close-spaced and on a motor-bike. This seems an unlikely mistake to make, unless the lamps on the bike were exceptionally small. However, something similar happened to me once, at a dark roundabout: headlights coming from the

right seemed too far apart to be on a car, and so my instant assumption was that something much bigger was approaching from further away, giving me time and space to move. But I was wrong — though I realized my mistake before it was too late, fortunately.

Planning to hire a car in New Zealand? They drive on the left there, but even so I'm told you need to break one habit: if you're turning left, and an oncoming vehicle is turning right into the same road, it's you that has to give way!

Finally, I've just been reading up on tyres. I didn't fully realize that they come in distinct summer, winter and all-season types; Richard Porter (our Thames Valley Group Newsletter Editor) tells me he has a set of winter ones that are serving him well right now — though he wouldn't want to drive long distances on them. But what was quite unexpected from my research was that the difference between types isn't just a matter of the tread: summer tyres (which mine are, I guess) actually start losing flexibility when the temperature drops below about 7 °C. I think I'll stay right off this snow, then.

*Peter Soul
Thames Valley Group of
Advanced Motorists*

Nursery Rhymes Anagrams

MELT FLIMSIEST TUFT (6,4,7)
 STOW KILTIED CULT (3,6,5)
 FREE QUANT HOSE (5,2,6)
 I NETTLE TURTLE (6,3,4)
 GOOIER RIPE EGG (7,6)
 JILT COHERENT LARK (6,4,6)
 A TEAK CAP (3,1,4)
 BE UNRAVELLED (8,4)
 EDGY PEGGY HID GILL (8,8)
 MENTION NO HAM (3,2,3,4)

About Us**How can the Group help me?**

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

How much does it cost?

The Skill for Life package which includes Associate Group Membership, the IAM Book "Pass Your Advanced Driving Test", the Advanced Test and the first year's membership of the IAM when you pass, costs just £139. As an Associate member, you will benefit from the Group's activities and have as many observed runs as you need to attain the IAM Test standard, (there is no additional charge for the observed runs). Associate membership is given on the understanding that you will apply for the advanced test within the first 12 months after joining the Group.

How does the Group Operate?

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

How do I join the Group?

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

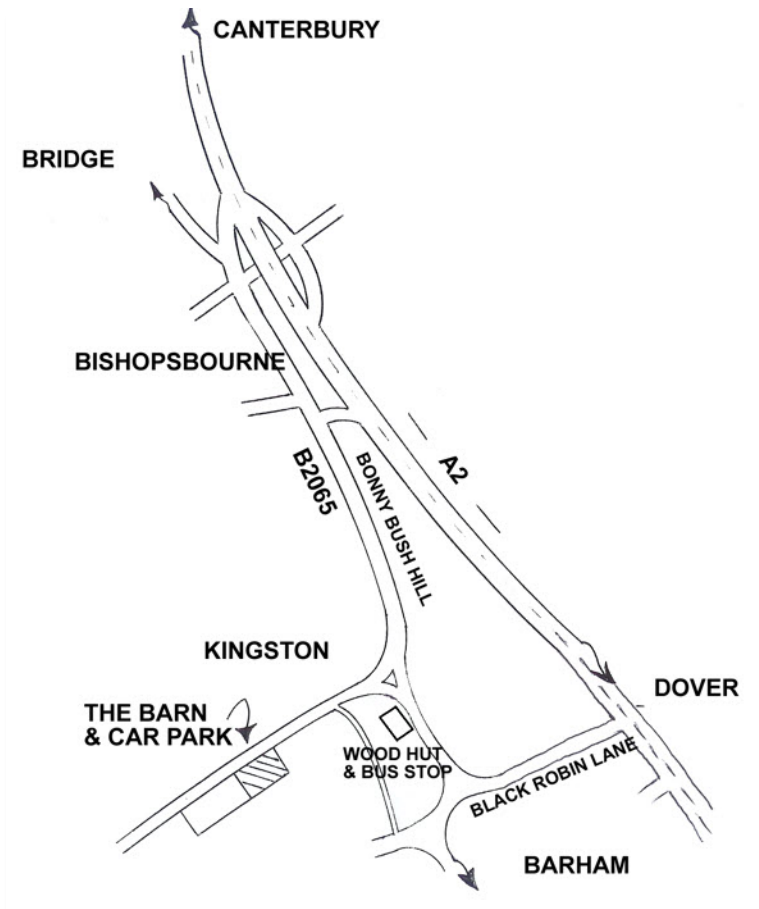
LITTLE MISS MUFFETT
 TWO LITTLE DUCKS
 QUEEN OF HEARTS
 LITTLE NUT TREE
 GEORGIE PORGIE
 LITTLE JACK HORNER
 PAT A CAKE
 LAVENDER BLUE
 HIGGELDY PIGGELDY
 MAN IN THE MOON

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

Cyrielle Gratpain
 Roger Sharp
 Susan Fisher
 James Tremain

New Members

Michael Golding

Events Data**Littlebourne War Memorial Hall**

- Second Thursday - 19.30pm

11th March - John Pearce, Retired
 Detective – Mystery of the Missing Nurse

8th April - Terry Friday – IAM Test
 Examiner

13th May - Graham Galvin on Police
 Matters

10th June - Annual Manoeuvring Evening
 at Hersden

8th July - Harry Debling – Red Cross

12th August - Vic's Quiz (re-scheduled
 from February)

Test Passes**Period:**

Associate	Date	Observer

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 - 15 May 2010

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.