



GO BETWEEN

Oxford IAM Group News Letter
February 2009



CONTENTS

From the Chair

A day with John Cave

Just a thought!

Death on our roads

Bikers' Corner

In the News

Much Appreciated

Group dive-out

Your committee

The last Newsletter!



From The Chair:
From The Chair:

From the saddle

A very nice bloke from the BBC dropped in the other morning for a coffee, a slice or two of toast and marmalade and a chat about driving in winter. After we'd fired the coffee machine up for a couple more cups, we headed out to record a short "as live" on the West Oxfordshire roads. It seems a lot of people had been enjoying closer acquaintance with hedges and ditches as the temperature fell, and the Beeb wanted to do help them out.

It was perhaps more than a little ironic that I rounded a corner (on the bicycle this time) the next day and found a man climbing from his Fiesta. He really was climbing too – because the car was sat on its side in one of the deeper ditches outside Black Bourton. By the time I reached him he had his shoulders out of the driver's window and was doing his best to persuade an ample stomach to follow.

"You alright?" I asked as I pedalled up.

"Yup – fine." He said, after a while.

"Need any help? Got a 'phone?"

"Yup – fine." He said, even more tersely.

I stopped to help him out, and we got talking.

"Blimey," he said (or words similar, but a little more robustly Anglo Saxon) "I

came round that corner and suddenly I was off the road. Bloody council – don't they send the gritters out?"

I thought this wasn't the time to explain that the council did indeed send out the gritters – and a damn fine job they do too – but even half a ton of grit on the main road isn't going to magically jump up and coat the surface of a tiny back-lane.

I thought it wasn't the time either to point out another glaring feature – the freshly-scraped windscreen on his car. His blood pressure had already suffered enough. Me pointing out the rather obvious and likely link between ice on his windscreen and ice on the road wasn't going to help.

Seems like an obvious observation link, doesn't it? If you have to chip the car out it's going to be slippery on the roads too. But it wasn't to my friend in the ditch. Not because he was stupid but simply because he didn't bother to think. Driving – for him – involved about as much intellectual input as channel-hopping on his TV remote.

So how do we get to people like this? The IAM is, to a great extent, self-selecting. We've all decided we weren't as great as we thought, so got ourselves trained. But what about most people – most drivers and riders for whom driving and riding is a peripheral activity? How do we reach them? How do we explain that there is territory beyond the L test pass?

One thing is for sure. We need to – because the road safety establishment is failing them miserably (as the excellent

Steve Haley will explain at our February meeting this year). It believes compliance and basic car control is all that matters. That's like saying you can be a consultant heart surgeon with book of rules and a sharp knife.



A day with John Cave.

I spent a day one-2-one with John Cave last week. John is an advanced driving instructor, and more about him can be found on his website: (www.drivetrain.uk.com)

This was the first professional tuition I have had since passing my standard driving test (unless you count the advanced driving test, which does have an element of coaching); consequently I don't have too much to compare it to. John is an early riser (unlike me), so following a \$0 minute drive through Oxfordshire's minor roads I arrived as arranged at his home around 8am. Over a welcome cup of tea John asked me what I was hoping for from the days driving? and quizzed me on my current driving experience. I told him about my experience observing for the IAM, This proved useful as I was already more than familiar with the Roadcraft book. I told him I was particularly hoping to improve my bend assessment and my overtaking however, anything else would be a bonus also. I told him I wanted him to be candid about my driving and did not mind if he was at all critical. I needn't have worried. John did not hold back he

So, a late new year resolution. Get one friend to get some training this year – car or bike. You'll already have done more for road safety than most government initiatives have achieved.

Mark McArthur-Christ

was 'constructively critical' always pointing out your problems without offending you or destroying your confidence just building on the abilities you already have.

The Drive:

Initially the drive did not go as well as I had wished I put this down to me being a slave to my stomach, and although I'd had breakfast before setting off, I was still very hungry! Luckily we stopped off at a shop and I stocked up for the rest of the day. 'Lesson learnt' next time I will have a packed lunch with me.

Things improved from then on. Although John said the drive standard was reasonable, there was one major fault, He covered this in his own car during a demonstration drive. His drive brought a smile to my face, it soon became apparent that John was on a completely different level to myself, reading the road a lot further ahead, the ride was a lot smoother far more confident and much, much more progressive than I have ever been. By "progressive" I am not talking just about speed, but more about reducing the over all journey time by being in the right place at the right time at the right speed, not getting caught at junctions or traffic lights, always being prepared to go ready to stop if necessary. But then, he has been doing this every day for more than

thirty years; It was a useful benchmark and provided me with lots of food for thought. Although his car (a newish Porsche Carrera S) is also in a different league to mine, this was not the defining factor. He also gave a complete commentary from start to finish, in a very fluent Police-like style (which is not surprising given his background). It was during the drive, following a series of overtakes, I got the first sign of John's humour and passion for driving. In his commentary, there was a phrase which I found almost unintelligible, later on during my drive I clearly made out him thanking the driver now behind for their assistance 'Eat lead, sucker!!'

We made are way back to his kitchen for some more tea and a theory lesson. John's major issue with my driving turned out to be the main theme of the day – 'using peripheral vision to detect movement' and using the focus of the eyes at all time to concentrate of where you want the car to go. He gave me a couple of specific examples: You are driving along a NSL road, and approaching a junction to the left where there is a DHL van waiting to emerge across your path. You want to drive straight on. The question is - where do you look? My answer to this was that you need to look at the driver of the van, to see if he is looking at you or at least if he is behaving in such a way that he seems aware of you. If not, then he is more of a threat. John disagreed. You look where you want the car to go, which is straight up the middle of the road, to the limit point. The reasoning behind this is you naturally tend to steer where you are looking. So if you look at the driver, you will tend to steer towards him and you come off the gas because you perceive him as a threat. Then, the

driver, who is judging his chances of making it out in front of you, makes the assessment that you are slowing down and keeping in to the left, and decides to drive in front of you, creating a hazard. Also, if the van does decide to move as you approach, becoming a threat, you will detect this faster using your peripheral vision which is more sensitive to motion at which point you would naturally look at it with your forward vision and respond accordingly.

There were several other scenarios where John recommends trusting in your peripheral vision to detect movement and judge your position on the road. I am still practicing this, although I am not 100% convinced it is the correct approach in all circumstances but to be fair, I am not sure John recommends it in all circumstances. For example, judging distance to something in front of you requires stereoscopic vision, so unless the car in front shows brake lights, it is possible to miss the fact that it is slowing down if you are focusing your gaze at the limit point at all times. Also, Roadcraft explicitly describes the process of scanning to take in a whole picture, for example while driving through town.

I am also slightly unclear about the distinction between the focus of your vision representing where you look when you perceive a threat, and where you want the car to go. There seems to be a conflict in the theory here, between the vision focus being the target, or the threat. I am not sure if this is John's favourite topic, or if it was something he identified which could specifically help me. In either case, it does seem to be making my steering less reactive to every little thing on the road, and

improving the smoothness overall. I do need to work on expanding the focus of vision from the limit point, for example to make more use of cross views in the country, I think.

Then it was my turn again, with John assisting. He had explained that I needed to trust him completely on this drive. What he did not warn me was that this would involve him reaching over and altering my steering to prevent me from returning to the left in some left-handers, when it was his judgement that I had the view and safety to remain out on the right. As I've not had anyone alter my steering since my L lessons, this was a shock, and at first I found myself fighting his control of this. But he is a grade 6 ADI, so I relaxed. Other forms of help and encouragement included the phrase "If you brake here, I'll stick a wet finger in your ear", while I was approaching a bend where my judgement of the limit point was apparently inferior to his. Another refrain was "power, power, more power, carpet, bury it!! ... Excellent!" as the limit point ran away from us. "Eyes up" was another oft-repeated mantra.

My feeling, which is difficult to describe, is that I do not fundamentally see the road in same way as John does. Other excellent drivers who I've driven with also seem to see the road in the same way as John). One possibility is that this is down to the way he uses his eyes, trusting peripheral vision and focusing on the limit point at all times. My eyes, on the other hand, seem lazy and reluctant to bring the limit point sharply into focus, with the consequence that I (maybe subconsciously) feel I am driving into the unknown. Hopefully, this is something which I can improve.

I am also aware that drivers' natural aversions to and judgement of risk vary. Some, like myself, will require coaching to eliminate over-cautiousness and hesitancy, and some are the opposite. I also wonder if my risk aversion makes me more overly reticent when judging an overtake or a bend, or how much space there is to the limit point.

We did lots of bend assessment and a few overtakes, with John saying less and helping less as the day went on. At the end of the day, John was very generous with his time, and it was a full extra hour of debrief, having finished on time. He also posted me a written report of the day. I would happily go back to see John again, as we got on quite well and he has a wealth of knowledge to tap into. John came highly recommended to me and I would happily pass this recommendation on to anyone else. If you are an enthusiastic driver, willing to have your opinions overturned, I am certain you will enjoy the experience immensely and as I did, learn a lot from the day. I felt I got every thing out of the day I was hoping for.

Be aware, though, these days are highly addictive!

Mark Reddin

Just a thought!

Recently, I returned home from work to some very sad news concerning an old Scuba diving chum of mine. His 17 year old daughter, who attends the same school as my son, was knocked off her bicycle that morning by a school bus, tragically she died at the scene. After my initial shock and the heart wrenching thoughts of the effect this tragedy will have on my friend and his family, I started to think about the hazards associated with buses being driven in busy pedestrian areas. I suppose as advanced riders and drivers we are constantly analysing hazards on the road in order to hone our skills to avoid or plan for them. So my thought processes following such tragic news should come as no surprise to me. I don't know all the facts of the accident, except the area was extraordinarily very busy as the annual fair in the town centre directed much of the traffic to the road where the accident occurred. I expect the full facts of what happened will emerge following an accident investigation, so I am certainly not trying to attach any blame one way or the other.

However, if one thinks about it, buses & coaches by the nature of the service they provide, often operate in very busy built up areas. This fact alone should require drivers to be of exceptionally high standard, possibly more than any other road user. We all know that maintaining 100% concentration is difficult but essential for the use of observation and anticipation skills, only this can help avoid accidents. The question is: "are we allowing bus drivers to give maximum attention to their driving?" If you are old enough to remember when the old London type buses were in use, (unfortunately I am),

you will recall the driver was totally isolated from the passengers, in fact the entrance to their cab was on the opposite side and end of the bus to where the passengers got on and off. All the activities of collecting the fares, stopping the bus, security of passengers, timing of the routes etc. were carried out by the Conductor. This left the drivers to give all their concentration to driving the bus. The last time I when of a bus the driver drove the bus while chatting to a passenger, programming some type of route management machine, sorted out his change and all this with a two way radio sqwaking to him about traffic conditions, and if this wasn't enough he has a CCTV monitor above his head to keep an eye on his passengers. I can only think this change in staffing and operation is part of some cost saving initiative or perceived efficiency? I did notice that many people were using pre-paid tickets, this at least removes the need for the driver to deal with cash, then they have only the radio and occasional talkative passenger to distract them. Perhaps going over to a pre-ticket system only and isolate driver's cab would help make us all a lot safer?

On an up side, a couple of years ago the Oxford IAM arranged a tour of the Oxford Bus depot, this gave us all a view from the drivers perspective, not an easy job! I think it is safe to say we were all very impressed by the high driving standards this particular company imposed on its drivers.

Chris Burras

Death on our roads



On 5th November we held our AGM and as usual this was an opportunity for our outgoing Chair and committee to report on the passed years' committee's activities and for the Chair to thank all members that had contributed to a successful year. A particular thanks went to Roger Pickering for his unstinting and professional job as Group Treasurer. The New committee was duly elected and our Speaker for the evening was introduced.

Sgt. Peter Jell of Thames Valley Police Road Mgt Division, - Investigation of Fatal Collisions section, gave a very informed talk about his role in the Roads Management Division formally Road Traffic Division. He explained the reasoning behind the change of title and that it was due to the increased role of the section which now encompasses activities such as criminal tracking, accident investigation, driving safety tuition, Bereavement support as well as every day traffic control. We are aware from the ANR lecture that our main roads are used by many criminals and Peter's division play a significant role in vehicle detection and capture of these criminal gangs. He explained that his staff are often criticized for not doing enough to prosecute traffic offenders particularly when poor driving leads to death, however, they are also criticized

for persecuting drivers instead of chasing real criminals. Peter explained how they are trying to reduce fatalities by offering hazard awareness courses as an alternative to points on the license. He felt that this is a far more effective way of reducing the figures. He also told the meeting about a recent initiative to target young drivers and pre-drivers by use of shock and reality road shows aimed at schools. Here young people are shown a film of young people just before a road traffic incident and then their involvement in the fatal accident itself. Then a Police officer address the audience explaining the trauma of breaking the news to the relatives, then a Fire officer explained the trauma of removing the bodies. The Medics followed them and finally the Real parents told of their battle to come to terms with the loss of their loved ones. The effect on a group of 900 young people is profound and hopefully paints the scene to be avoided at all costs. Peter summed up his presentation by highlighting the importance of educating people to drive better and thanked us for our contribution. I think I speak for everyone when I say it was an excellent talk and our thanks go to Sgt. Jell and to Tony Chalky for organising it.

Chris B

'Bikers Corner' *The Knowledge:*



Motorcycles and the importance of correct mirror use:

Mirror glass can be plain, convex or concave, each give the rider a very different perspective on distance and speed of the following traffic, this should be remembered when riding unfamiliar bikes. It is vital that the rider adjust the mirrors correctly before riding off and knows the amount that can be view using them. Often the mirror arm is too short which leads to the riders view being partially obscured by their sleeve, it is not uncommon to need to move you position on the bike to gain better view, or to take advantage of a change in the road or lean during bend. Mirrors should also be spotlessly clean, vehicles in the distance become much smaller particularly fast moving bikes a small amount dirt can easily obscure them.

I can guarantee that the most common issue that needs to be addresses with all my Associates 'besides riding too close to the vehicle in front', is the lack of frequent mirror use. When questioning them about this they say they are aware that they should use them 4 to 7 seconds but forget. The cornerstone to Advance riding and driving come to that, is 'good observation'; Being aware of what is happening around you is the way a rider can make effective decisions on the ever changing road conditions, Hazards are constantly developing good observation and planning enable a rider to take advance action. Rear observation is so important, danger comes from behind as well as in front; a vehicle colliding with the rear of a bike is often catastrophic, causing the rider to release their brakes and handlebars leading to an uncontrolled forward movement. Good and frequent rear observation may well

enable a rider to avoid this by being award of how your actions may effect the vehicles behind. It is worth say that Observation is 'looking and seeing' i.e. You can not easily gauge speed through mirrors as it is effectively using your forward vision which is less sensitive to movement. Only by frequent use of the mirrors can you see the size of the gap changing giving you an indication of the following vehicles speed.

The idea of trying to remember to use your mirrors is the first mistake, use of mirrors should be and integral part of the observation process. The need to use mirrors should be invoked by road information, and part of the riders plan. Use links as a memory aid to when to use your mirrors.

- In busy urban areas where traffic is clogged the use of mirrors can be less frequent as most activity that my effect you is to the front and sides filtering traffic, pedestrians etc. always glance in the mirror before making a move, or if the traffic flow is going change.
- In urban area where traffic is moving more freely situations change more quickly, brake lights, traffic signs, change of position, potential hazards should all be links for the rider to use the mirrors.
- In rural areas in National speed limits every 10 seconds links as before, changes is traffic speeds ahead, overtake opportunities for you or those following, debris in the road, potholes etc.
- On dual carriageways or motorways most of the danger comes from behind, the rider would do well to remember that

at 70 mph a vehicle covers 350m every 10 seconds.

Advantages of mirror use over shoulder checks are:

- The mirrors are positioned in front of you with in your normal field of vision.
- When looking ahead the mirrors are in the rider's peripheral field of vision, so the ride will more easily detect movement in the mirrors.
- Similarly if the rider is looking in the mirror they will detect movement changes ahead.
- If something develops ahead requiring quick action, the mirror provides the initial safety check with out effecting stability, vision or control.
- The mirrors pass through the field of vision when looking left or right and can be scanned in passing.

In The News **BBC News 28th Oct 2008**

Cyclists fined in safety campaign



Following last years police crackdown

These advantages and many more can be found in an excellent book called 'Not The Blue Book' by Dave Jones

<http://www.notthebluebook.co.uk/index.html>

I highly recommend this book as part of an advanced ride's reading list.

Chris B

on Oxford cyclist's dangerous habit of jumping Red Traffic Lights more than 80 cyclists have been fined in under three hours by police for riding without lights.



About half of all unlit cyclists who are injured on the roads in Oxfordshire are hurt while riding around Oxford city centre at night and two-thirds of all cyclist casualties are aged between 20-24, police said.

All those stopped were issued with a £30 fine, but will not have to pay it if they

show a valid receipt for a new set of lights within a week.

Pc Mark Pilling said: "At this time of the year there are many students arriving in the city. " Understandably, some choose to buy a bike, but in order to save themselves a few pounds they fail to buy lights for it".

"But as the nights draw in, even in well-lit streets anyone cycling without lights at night is extremely vulnerable."

I conducted my own mini survey the other day of the amount of cyclist I passed on my way in to Oxford at from the Red Bridge Park and Ride at about 6.30pm. I counted eleven, all where aged between 18-25years and most where also dressed in black or dark colours. It begs the question: how effective was the police action in deterring cyclists from riding with out lights? Not very is the answer to that! So what can be done to encourage cyclists to wear reflective clothing and use effective well positioned lights, or should we just except the injuries and deaths each year on Oxford's roads is a price we pay for having a city with mixed traffic.



Personally, I think the only solution is to separate the cyclists from the rest of the traffic with cordoned cycle lanes like the one that crosses over Donnington bridge (see picture) or to widen foot paths to accommodate both cycles and pedestrians.

Much appreciated:

I heard some sad news the other day, one of our most experienced Motorcyclists has left the Oxford Area Group.

However, it is nice to be able to use the newsletter to thank a valued member for all their hard work over the years.

Dave Gilgley has been a Senior Observer at the Oxford branch of IAM since 2003. Dave joined the group in 1999 and believe it or not, his original Observer was concerned that Dave might not pass his test! Now to anyone who has experienced Dave Gil's instruction, this is hard to believe and as it turned out his Observer's worries were unfounded; Dave passed his test with ease. But this was not enough for Dave he immediately started his Observer and senior Observer soon followed. Dave also undertook the IAM's Individual Assessment, something many of us aspire to do but often don't get around to doing. Dave continued to develop his riding ability and instructor training by successfully qualifying as a CBT and DAS Instructor at the DSA's Cardigan H.Q. and since has worked part-time for Abbey Motorcycle Instructors passing on his knowledge to hundreds of new motorcyclists.

Over the years Dave professionalism in training Associates and Observers has been tireless, he has a 100% record of IAM test passes, (not many of us can make this claim) he once told me that

this is largely because he does not focus on training people purely to pass the test but to be advanced riders. I have been fortunate to have had Dave as my Observer and Senior Observer, he also training me up to CBT instructor level. Dave is a real perfectionist and misses nothing when Observing/instructing; He combines humour and knowledge with an empathetic approach to his students whilst always expecting a high standard. I was constantly amazed at his ability to recall things I had missed or could have improved upon during my ride and Observer training.

Dave has decided to take a rest from the IAM for a while, this is a great loss to the Oxford Area Group and we hope that he will return in the future. I am sure I speak for all the membership in thanking him for his help over the years and to wish him well in what ever he decides to do in the future.

Chris Burras
Co Editor

The West Oxfordshire and Cotswolds Drive Out – Saturday 18th April 2009, 10am – 2pm.

To all **full car** members of the Oxford Area Group of Advanced Motorists;



Come along to this Car Drive Out. The bikers (and other driving clubs) have all the fun and do this regularly; it's our turn! The (mostly B) roads in the Cotswolds around Charlbury, West Oxfordshire, are sublime, so this is where we will base ourselves. This is an opportunity to meet and drive with other members of the group.

What's the point – I'm already a member of the IAM, don't you know?

This is not mentoring like the driving you might have done with your Observer as an associate. Instead, here, the goals are to discover and enjoy the exquisite roads, have fun, meet other members, talk about driving and maybe learn something from each other, in that order.

Who do I drive with? You will be paired up with another full IAM member in advance.

How much does it cost? There is no cost apart from your own petrol and your lunch if you wish to have a nice pub lunch of reasonable cost afterwards with the rest of the group.

Where do we drive to? Turn by turn directions for your choice of about 7 or 8 great circular routes from Charlbury will be supplied – you just choose, drive and enjoy. Your partner will navigate from the route notes and a road atlas; getting lost is half the fun! (Sat nav files are also supplied for Garmin and Tom Tom if your unit supports routes, but that's cheating).

How long do the routes last?

The routes are tested and timed at between 1 hour and 1½ hours depending on the route, at a moderate pace.

What cars do we use? You drive your own car, and your partner drives their car with you as a passenger/navigator. If you know the other member well, you

may arrange for them to be insured on your vehicle for the day, but that's entirely optional. Apart from that, any normal social, domestic and *pleasure* policy will cover this.

I might want to go for another drive after lunch... You can rest assured that there will be enough die-hards who will be of a similar mindset to yourself to pair up with someone else after lunch, but that's optional. I certainly will want to drive again.

I can't make the morning – only the afternoon. Email me as below and indicate this – see the above point!

I'm washing my car that day. Will there be any more of these? If this is successful, then yes. So don't wash your car – come along (you'll have to wash your car again after this anyway!)

OK – I'm sold. What do I do now?
Just drop me an email to mark_reddin@hotmail.com, and put the date in your diary. I'll contact you nearer the time with all the necessary arrangements.

If you have any questions not covered by the above, then just email me on the same address.

Looking forward to it **Saturday 18th April 2009, 10am – 2pm**, Mark Reddin, Senior Observer, Oxford Area Group of Advanced Motorists.

Go Between newsletter changes its format:

I am sad to tell you that I have decided to standing down as Newsletter co-Editor. I have really enjoyed working as a team with Helen Deeley since our first copy in December 2005 but I feel it is time for a change.

Due in part to the effectiveness of our new improved website www.iam-oxford.org.uk/index.html

The committee decided that future newsletters will be reduced in size and will largely take the form of a reminder of forth coming events. However, if any members would still like to submit an article for inclusion our Editor Helen Deeley will be glad to receive them.

Chris Burras

Your Committee:

Mark McArthur-Kristie	(Chairman)
Clive Stayt	(Chief Car Observer – Vice Chairman)
Tony Chalkly	(Secretary - Vice Chairman)
Nick Morse	(Treasurer)
Ducan Jones	(Membership Secretary)
Chris Caspell	(Associate Co-ordinator)
John Lang	(Chief Motorcycle Observer)
Helen Deeley	(Newsletter Editor)
Peter Ingram	
Mike Roberts	
Janet Van Den Berge	