

GO BETWEEN

Oxford IAM Group Newsletter

October 2010



FROM THE SADDLE

So, does the IAM still matter?

This year sees crashes at their lowest level since records began. We're killing fewer people than ever - although the rate of fall has slowed markedly since the mid 1990s. Cars have airbags, side-impact bars, seatbelt pre-tensioners, anti-submarine seats, ABS, TCS, TSB, SOS and probably even BBC too. If your car looks after you so well, why does anyone still need to bother getting trained? If you believe the latest study from the RAC Foundation, they don't. In fact, getting trained is a thoroughly bad thing. Apparently, in their view, "Educational interventions... in some circumstances may inadvertently increase exposure to risk."

So training isn't just neutral - it's actually harmful. So they seem to say.

As far as I can see, that argument isn't so far away from Robert Gifford's (the Chairman of the Parliamentary Council on Transport Safety - PACTS) comment that "trained riders just kill themselves faster."

It strikes me as a little odd that organisations supposed to be helping drivers and riders are so eager to queue up to demand more controls and penalties. Both the AA and RAC have come out strongly against the removal of speed camera funding. More significantly, I'm amazed at the same organisations are now eager to publish studies that show that training isn't positive, or even just neutral, but harmful.

Using their argument, we could slash the deficit overnight.

After all, if training is harmful, then why are we wasting money on education in any form? We can simply close every school, college and university in the UK, put the teachers and professors out to grass and sell the buildings for housing.

I wonder how much the writers and publishers understand how training really works. From experience, I'm curious how many of them even have a driving licence, let alone any sort of advanced driving or riding qualification. But perhaps this isn't about driving and riding at all. Maybe it's about something more fundamental - a way of looking at the world.

There are people who believe that if only everything was controlled, there was more compliance with rules and regulations and if only people just did what they're told, we'd all be fine. And fined too, regularly. Then there are others who believe that, rather than externally-imposed controls, people should be taught to think for themselves, trained and educated and empowered. Big Brother versus Winston Smith.

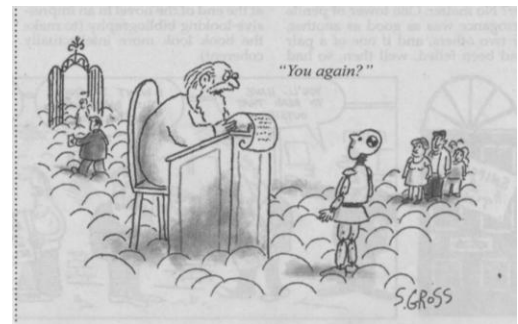
I have a sneaky feeling that the "anti-trainers" are keen to see training purely as developing bike and car control skills, honing the individual's ability to handle the machine. They're much less keen on acknowledging what training is really about - instilling the mental processes that make for safe driving and riding through developing anticipation, observation, hazard management and planning.

So, two related predictions for you from Mystic MMC...

First, now that speed cameras are (thankfully) history, the anti-car lobby will be stepping up to demand mandatory satellite-controlled, in-vehicle speed limiters. The technology is already there and has been trialled several years ago at Leeds University.

Second, there'll be a big anti driver and rider education move from the same lobby. Because once they acknowledge that safe driving and riding are more about mental processes than compliance with external, fixed and necessarily arbitrary rules, they'll need to admit their obsession with limit compliance was a waste of time (at best). And they'll be out of a job.

Mark McArthur-Christie



GROUP NEWS

RECENT PASSES

Congratulations to Barbara Kingman, Rachel Neill, Vicki Waskett, Julian Pudner, John Mayo & Rachel Allsworth on passing their Car tests, and to Paul Thompson, Andrew Dent, Nigel Braine-Hartnell, Gary Davies, Mark Newby & Chris Harrison for passing the motorcycle test.

I AM AN ADVANCED DRIVER, WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

by Mark Reddin, Senior Observer, Oxford Group.

It is possible that there are IAM members who believe there are no more driving challenges to be undertaken, or that their driving is as good as it will ever be. Thankfully, for those who still have a desire to improve their road driving, neither is true. I thought it would be useful to summarise some options here.

Here, I will only talk about improving your road driving, not track driving. Some of the options I have direct experience of; with others I have friends who have direct experience. I've also indicated the approximate cost of the options below. It may surprise you to find that some of them are essentially free, and others cost very little.

Watch an Observer drive. During the Summer, the Observers give demonstration drives at monthly meetings in Kidlington, so come along and add to their nerves! Cost -free.

Have an assessment drive with an Observer. Many members will only have ever driven with one person giving them constructive feedback on their driving – the Observer who prepared them for their IAM test. The “mock test” and the IAM test itself are more heavily focused on assessment, rather than feedback. Each Observer has their own set of qualities they tend to look for and help you develop. As an IAM member, you are entitled, for free, to request a drive with another Observer. You can set a specific purpose to it if you wish (perhaps night driving, or smoother gear changes, more progression, or some other topic). The Observer, in many cases, will also be willing as part of this, to give you a demonstration drive. The best person to contact is the Car Coordinator, Chris Caspell.



Become an Observer. Observing is one of the best ways to keep you on your toes and to develop your own driving and understanding. Many people are put off doing this for a variety of reasons, for example time commitment or lack of confidence. An Observer training scheme is run with the Oxford group to ensure that you are not given an associate until you are ready. This training will both improve your driving and coaching / Observing skills. In addition, each Observer is assigned a Senior Observer who will give them as much help as required with their initial associates. The best person to contact is the Chief Car Observer, Clive Stayt. Cost – free.

The contact details for the three local group options above can be found at www.iam-oxford.org.uk/

Take an IAM Driving Assessment - £35. This is a more feedback-based version of the IAM test you've already taken. For maximum benefit, I'd suggest you ask that you get a different Examiner than the one who took you for your test, so that you get different input.

www.iam.org.uk/driving/riding_assessments/driving/riding_assessments/flypage.tpl.html

The IAM Special Assessment - £60. This exercise marks you against the IAM perfect driver and gives you a percentage score in a more stringent version of the IAM test. The Special Assessment is only carried out by IAM Staff Examiners (as opposed to regular examiners) to ensure consistency. It is not a coaching exercise. The highest score which has ever been achieved, I believe, is 97%.

www.iam.org.uk/after_the_iam_test_/iamspecialassessment.html

ROSPA/RoADAR – This, in full, stands for The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents



Advanced Drivers and Riders, which is quite a mouthful! Luckily, most people just call it Rospa Car, or Rospa Bike. Their program is quite similar to the IAM programme, with the differences that the Rospa test is graded, and that if you wish to retain your qualification and membership, you need to re-take the test every 3 years.

Rospa work directly with the “Roadcraft” book, rather than also publishing their own book. There are four possible results – Fail, Bronze, Silver and Gold.

The question arises for some of the equivalence between an IAM test pass and a Rospa result. This is a controversial topic. Rospa people tend to say that someone who barely met the standard for an IAM pass would get a Rospa Bronze if the same drive had been given on a Rospa test. On the other hand, a good IAM driver might well get a Rospa Gold. If you're curious, the only way to find out is to take their test.

You can just apply to take the test on its own, which currently costs £48. However, for maximum benefit, you'd be better off joining a Rospa group and going through their training, which is similar to that of the IAM. The cost of this part varies between groups, but will probably be about £40, and you'd need to buy a copy of Roadcraft if you don't already have one. A total budget of around £100 should be adequate. If you do approach a Rospa group for training, it is worth mentioning that you've already passed the IAM test. This makes it more likely you will get an Observer (some groups call them “Tutors”) who will stretch your development a bit more.

One problem with Rospa for people living around Oxford is that there is no convenient Rospa group. If you are prepared to travel a bit further, Rospa groups are listed on the RoADAR website;

www.roadar.org.uk

ADUK – This is a website which was set up a number of years ago by an enthusiast who wished to promote Advanced Driving in a way agnostic of any particular organisation. As well as lots of useful information on the site itself, there is also a very active forum and community. This forum is helpful and polite, unlike some of the other Advanced Driving fora!

The ADUK forum community runs roughly monthly driving days. These days are very well organised. Attendees are paired with a different driving partner for morning and afternoon, generally with someone who is likely to be able to help them. In addition, the best roads in the area will already have been put together for you into routes with directions for you to drive and enjoy. Your passenger generally also acts as navigator, and getting lost is half the fun. Sat Nav files are also generally provided. The focus of the days is on enjoying driving, talking about driving, and learning about driving, in that order.

There is no cost to any part of ADUK. Registration on the forum is free, and once registered, you can see where the next driving days will be. The driving days tend to run from March to October.

www.advanced-driving.co.uk

ClubDriving – This was set up a number of years ago as an avenue for existing Advanced Drivers to further improve their driving (although there is no requirement for any particular qualification in order to join ClubDriving). It costs £30 a year to be a member. It is worth this cost to get access to the mentor list, which lists contact details of people who are willing, for free, to spend half a day, or a full day, with you to evaluate and improve your driving. There are several within an hour's drive of Oxford. The mentors are all either at least Rospa Gold or have undertaken a specific mentoring course with Club Driving.

The Oxford group's own Ian Jeffs has recently taken over the running of Club Driving.

Private Training – There are a number of individuals running private Advanced Driver training. Ian Jeffs (www.roadcraft-driving.com) and John Cave (www.drivetrain.uk.com) are two examples convenient to Oxford. You'll need to contact them for costs.



HPC – This is a club run by very enthusiastic Advanced Drivers. You can find out more at www.hpc.org.uk

I hope this article has made you consider some options to take your driving further which you had not known about, or considered, before.

Mark Reddin

DIARY

- October 17 Ride-out to Rutland Water
- November 3 AGM & Tesco Distribution Fleet Management with Richard Stevens.
- December 1 Christmas Quiz

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- January No meeting
- February 2 Watch this space!

Exeter Hall is booked for the 1st Wednesday of each month from February onwards- Tony Chalkly is working very hard to put together a great programme of speakers. These will be confirmed nearer the time, but I can assure you they are set to be fascinating. We would also be interested to hear your suggestions for future meetings! Everyone is welcome, and there's tea, coffee & biscuits provided.

Committee Members

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| Mark McArthur-Christie - Chair | Ian Jeffs - Events Manager |
| Clive Stayt -Vice Chair & Chief Car Observer | Mark Reddin |
| Tony Chalkly -Vice Chair & Secretary | John Lang - Chief Motorcycle Observer & Co-ordinator |
| Duncan Jones - Membership Secretary | Peter Ingram |
| Nick Morse - Treasurer | Helen Deeley - Newsletter Editor |
| Chris Caspell - Car Associate Co-ordinator | |

All Contributions will be gratefully received, however Editors' decisions on content are final, & I reserve the right to edit articles. Any opinions stated are personal unless otherwise noted.

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