

MINI **ROUNDABOUT** June 2010

MELKSHAM

SPEED
GEAR
POSITION
ACCELERATION
INFORMATION

INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS
MELKSHAM & DISTRICT

www.m-a-m.org.uk
Registered Charity No: 1055930

WHAT'S ON?

All monthly social evenings are held on the third Thursday of the month at the Riverside Club, Bath Road, Melksham, SN12 6LP unless otherwise advised, starting at 19:30. There is a modest charge of £1 to cover refreshments and a ticket for the raffle.

If you are not sure where the Riverside Club is there is a map on our website.

Bring a friend: All welcome, including non-members and members of other groups

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| June 17th | The Universe, 42 and Everything – Peter Rodger, Chief Examiner, IAM
<i>(N.B. There will be no Library available on this date)</i> |
| July 15th | Skittles Night, The Oliver Cromwell, Bromham, 7:30pm
<i>(N.B. There will be no social evening at the Riverside Club on this date)</i> |
| July 22nd | Observer's Meeting for all current and prospective Observers
The Bell on the Common, Broughton Gifford, 7:30pm |
| August | NO SOCIAL EVENING DURING AUGUST |
| September 16th | Speed Limits? – Rodney Hart, Retired MAM Senior Observer |
| October 21st | Life as a Coach Driver – Jon Shobbrook from Beeline Coaches |
| November 18th | Sharing the Road with Horses – Julie Garbutt, British Horse Society |
| December 9th | Archery - Paul Wilkins <i>(N.B. This is the second Thursday of the month)</i> |

The most up-to-date information can be found on our website. Please check this regularly, as regrettably, last minute changes to events do occur. If you have any suggestions for events or speakers for social evenings, please contact Helen Pickett at events.coordinator@m-a-m.org.uk

CONGRATULATIONS

on passing the Advanced Driving Test

Associate
Mike Bowerman

Observer
David Major

Further Information on Upcoming Events

For a full list of upcoming events see the front page of Mini-Roundabout or visit the website at www.m-a-m.org.uk

The Universe, 42 and Everything – 17th June

Riverside Club, Bath Road, Melksham, SN12 6LP, 7:30pm

Peter Rodger, Chief Examiner of the IAM will be coming to speak to us on this date. Please make an extra-special effort to attend what will be a very interesting and enlightening evening. Peter's topic *The Universe, 42 and Everything* will literally contain information on everything motoring-related. There will also be the usual opportunity to ask questions, so get your thinking caps on!

Skittles Night – 15th July

The Oliver Cromwell, St. Edith's Marsh, Bromham, SN15 2DF, 7:30pm

We still only have a few names on the list for our annual skittles night. Please sign up at our June social evening or contact Helen at events.coordinator@m-a-m.org.uk to book your place. Cost £4, which includes food (sandwiches, savouries & chips). Please bring cash payment on the night. Guests welcome. N.B. There will be no meeting at the Riverside Club on this date.

Observer's Meeting – 22nd July

The Bell on the Common, Broughton Gifford, SN12 8LX, 7:30pm

This meeting is for anyone who wishes to find out more about the work of our Observers. All current Observers are expected to attend along with any prospective Observers. If you would like to find out more about becoming an Observer please come to this meeting. Further information can be found at www.m-a-m.org.uk and clicking on 'Coaching' and then 'Training Dates'. Please contact David Major at chief.car.observer@m-a-m.org.uk or on 01985 217050 to confirm your attendance.

Future Events

We are looking at the following events as a possibility for the not-too-distant future:

- * Karting
- * 4x4 training
- * Skid Pan
- * Archery taster

If you would be interested in any of these activities please sign-up at Group social evenings or contact Helen at events.coordinator@m-a-m.org.uk

Beware of Thieves

We have had a report of a theft of a woman's handbag from the car of one of our members. If this had been whilst the car was unoccupied you could be forgiven for thinking that it was silly to leave a handbag in an unoccupied car. However, at the time of the theft the car was not only occupied but was being driven! The incident occurred whilst stopped at traffic lights at the Longfield Roundabout in Trowbridge, where the thief seized the opportunity, opened the car door and ran off with the handbag.

Although in the past it was not advisable to lock car doors whilst travelling in case of emergency, it seems that thieves are finding new ways of getting what they want. Therefore, even when driving, it is best to keep your possessions out of sight to avoid further incidents like this. David Major, MAM Chief Observer advises that with modern cars it is now much easier to gain access to your vehicle in an emergency so if you feel more comfortable locking your doors, then do so. This is especially advisable for females travelling alone at night.

Cut the queues, says IAM

Have you ever sat in a queue of traffic, patiently waiting your turn, only to see a car speeding down the outside lane and then “pushing in” ahead of you?

It may be frustrating, and appear more than a little rude, but perhaps that opportunistic driver sailing past you is in fact just making good use of an otherwise empty lane. And by being over-polite and joining the queue you are simply adding to the length of the congestion.

IAM Chief Examiner Peter Rodger said: "Driver etiquette means that ‘zip merging’ can be frowned upon by drivers in long queues of traffic, but if all available lanes are used, right up to the bottleneck, it is perfectly acceptable for vehicles from each lane to take it in turns to merge into the single lane. This reduces the length of road the queue stretches along and prevents blocked junctions."

“Pinch points” are all too common on our roads, but the advice in the Highway Code on how to “merge in turn” is vague.

Mr Rodger offers this advice: “If you are approaching a long queue of traffic in only one lane, you should stay in the lane you’re in, even if it’s empty, as long as you reduce your speed. Even if you have to merge further down, it is worth using all the space available to avoid unnecessarily long tailbacks.

“When travelling alongside a queue of traffic keep your speed right down and be extra vigilant, as other drivers may be considering pulling out into the empty lane.”

[Ed: See the following rules from the Highway Code (these are guidelines and are not the law):

- Rule 134: You should follow the signs and road markings and get into the lane as directed. In congested road conditions do not change lanes unnecessarily. Merging in turn is recommended but only if safe and appropriate when vehicles are travelling at a very low speed, e.g. when approaching road works or a road traffic incident. It is not recommended at high speed.
- Rule 288: Where lanes are restricted due to roadworks, merge in turn

I always make a habit of using all of the available road space but this often leads to frustrated drivers hurling abuse and keeping as small a gap as possible to avoid letting me in, therefore probably creating an even bigger queue as we fight for position. This behaviour then frustrates me as many drivers are obviously not aware of the Highway Code. Have you experienced this? What are your thoughts on the matter? Let me know at roundabout.editor@m-a-m.org.uk

Worst Driver Award

8th place goes to...



Take care on country roads, says IAM

With the weather finally warming up, the IAM has urged drivers and riders to take particular care on country roads. Crashes on rural roads tend to be more serious, even in modern cars, and unfamiliar country roads hold many hidden risks. Neil Greig, IAM Director of Policy and Research, said: "The lush grass at this time of year makes it particularly difficult to see round bends, so take corners with extra care. There is bound to be lots of wildlife tearing about, so be prepared for them."

Summer is the peak season for rural road deaths and serious injuries, and 45 per cent of rural road deaths and serious injuries occur on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, most occurring when the weather is fine and the roads are dry*. Fair weather biking means that the number of motorcycle crashes also tends to go up in the summer months, with more than three quarters of motorcycle deaths and injuries happening on dry roads in fine weather.

"Weekend riders should be aware that twice as many bikers die on rural roads than on urban roads. There are also more serious or fatal biker casualties at the weekend," added Mr Greig. "If we all share the road safely this bank holiday, we can make sure everyone, on four wheels or two, gets the same enjoyment out of our unique countryside."

*Source: IAM report: *Rural roads - the biggest killer*

It's not everyday ...

Twelve drivers from or associated with our Melksham IAM Group displayed their driving skills – and bravery – at Castle Combe's Skid Pan last Sunday (6 June 2010). The first 6 were let loose on the monkeynut-shaped track with the stern reminder that it was not a figure of 8! 3 were in a front-wheel drive Rover, and 3 were in a rear-wheel drive BMW, taking turns until everyone had had a go. The two groups changed cars mid-way during this first experience. Eye-witnesses reported quite a bit of sideways movement and the occasional 360 degree spin as the participants courageously pressed the accelerator.

After this first period of enthusiastic sliding about, they were briefed about how to control the skids. Meanwhile the second 6 set to their slides and spins, and while they were being briefed, the first 6 went back to the track to put the advice into action, etc. This was not easy, as many different actions had to be coordinated at once, but progress was visible to the onlookers.

After all 12 participants completed this first part, it was time for various types of emergency stop. This was a bit frightening as we had to accelerate rather sharply towards a cone, braking only at the last moment. An instructor sat in the front seat for each run, and at one point was asked "Why are you holding the emergency brake?" Avoidance braking, cadence braking and using ABS (in a different car) were all practised. Yours truly was the only one to take out 'granny' (the cone), due to looking at rather than away from it!

The instructors conducted the experience with confident expertise and good humour, the time on the Skid Pan was as enjoyable as it was beneficial. There is much that can be done when a skid occurs, but it's by no means easy to carry out in the heat of the moment, when instinct kicks in rather than the appropriate techniques. Such experience is vital, and repetition undoubtedly a good thing.

I won't say we had to be dragged from the cars when it was time to stop and get out, but it sure was fun, and we would have been happy to carry on until our arms fell off.

All those participating received Skid Control Experience certificates and a booklet summarising the skid control techniques: Richard Clark, Richard Dalton, Vanessa Douglas-Green, Archer Endrich, Andrew Hamblin, Pete Marshman, Stephen Marshman, Luke Pickett, Chris Tarbitten, Judy Tarbitten, Sue Tumber, Paul Wilkins.

Archer Endrich

[Ed: If you have any pictures from this event, please email them to Pat at librarian@m-a-m.org.uk]

Gear up for tougher roads, says IAM

With 1st June marking the 75th anniversary of the introduction of the driving test in the UK, the IAM has called for drivers to continually improve their technique in keeping [up] with increasingly demanding driving conditions.

Peter Rodger, IAM Chief Examiner, said: "There are more cars on the road than ever before, and the driving environment is becoming more complicated. Our driving tests, however, have changed little over the years, and an improvement in driving standards is needed to fill the gap.

"Although cars are becoming easier to drive – with much improved brakes and suspension as well as power steering and a host of safety systems - traffic has significantly increased and traffic networks have become immensely more complex, so the driver needs far more understanding of what's going on outside the car," he said.

The IAM also wants to see a rural road element being incorporated into the driving test, as it is not currently compulsory. In the UK 71 per cent of road deaths occur on rural roads.

"It is improving the driver which will make the single biggest improvement to road safety in the future, and drivers need to take it upon themselves to adopt a lifelong learning approach," added Mr Rodger.

- In 1935 the driving test was introduced. Around 246,000 candidates applied, with a pass rate of 63 per cent, and for a period 250 examiners were taking at least nine - and up to sixteen - half-hour driving tests a day. Within a year the death toll had fallen by nearly a thousand.
- In 1934, 7,343 people were killed on Britain's roads when there were just 2.4 million vehicles. In 2008 there were two-thirds fewer deaths (2,538), but fourteen times as many vehicles (34 million).
- In 2008 the learner pass rate was 41 per cent for women and 47 per cent for men.

[Ed: Do you have any memories of your driving test(s)? If you would like to share them please contact roundabout.editor@m-a-m.org.uk]

AGM

Another Annual General Meeting has been and gone! We would like to thank Chris Tarbitten and Marie Green, who have stepped down from the Committee, for all their hard work in recent years. We welcome Archer Endrich to the ranks as our new Secretary, who we are sure will do a fantastic job for us.

We are always looking for willing volunteers to get more involved with the Group by becoming a Committee Member. If you would be interested in this please contact us.

The draft minutes from the 2010 AGM are now available to view on our website. Please take a moment to have a read through. These will remain in draft format until they are approved at the next AGM on **Thursday 19th May 2011**.

FURTHER NOTICES

- **Observers:** If you think you would like to be an observer and/or would like more information about observing please contact David Major, Chief Car Observer, by telephone on 01985 217050.
- **Email addresses:** Help the environment - if you have an email address but receive your newsletters by post please let the Editor, Luke Pickett, know your email address. You benefit from early receipt of Newsletters, early notice of special events, and we save on postage, time and effort, as well as using up fewer trees! A win-win situation.
- **Speakers:** If you know of someone who could give us an interesting talk, or have a suggestion for a talk, at our social evenings please advise the Events Coordinator, Helen Pickett.
- **Publicity:** If you are able to display posters or distribute a few leaflets around your local area please contact Luke Pickett to obtain some.
- **Contact Details:** If you move house, or your email or telephone number changes, please inform Luke Pickett and Angela Summers so that you don't lose contact with us.
- **DriveCheck:** Remember that MAM is offering a FREE observed run for all potential new members so tell your friends now! For more information please contact David Major.
- **Website:** For the most up-to-date information, check out our website at www.m-a-m.org.uk

CONTACT US

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or:

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If you have any suggestions about this News Sheet, or any other aspect of our activities, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Disclaimer

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