

## MINI ROUNDABOUT

January 2011

### MELKSHAM

SPEED  
GEAR  
POSITION  
ACCELERATION  
INFORMATION

### INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS MELKSHAM & DISTRICT

[www.m-a-m.org.uk](http://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**

<b>January 20<sup>th</sup></b>	Sound Design – Archer Endrich (N.B. There will be no library on this date)
<b>February 17<sup>th</sup></b>	Hugh Grainger-Allen, Assistant Chief Driving Examiner, DSA
<b>March 17<sup>th</sup></b>	TBC
<b>April 21<sup>st</sup></b>	Sandra Brandon, Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA)
<b>May 19<sup>th</sup></b>	21 <sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting Speaker: David Douch on the topic of Vehicle Occupant Security

*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](mailto:events.coordinator@m-a-m.org.uk)*

## CONGRATULATIONS

On passing the Advanced Test

**Associate**  
Richard Ward

**Observer**  
Mike Doggart

## **Membership Renewal**

It's that time of year again! Angela will be writing to you soon inviting you to renew your membership. Membership remains at £12 for 2011. You will need to return the Membership Renewal Form and Gift Aid Form to Angela by 31<sup>st</sup> January at the latest. If you receive *Mini-Roundabout* via email you can send your forms to Angela via email if you wish. With the upcoming phasing out of cheques now is a good time to think about paying by standing order. If you would like to do this please complete the standing order instruction and send it to your bank (if you normally pay by standing order there is no need to send this form again, but you do still need to send your renewal form to Angela). All renewal forms and gift aid forms should be returned to the Membership Secretary, Angela Summers, at:

[membership.officer@m-a-m.org.uk](mailto:membership.officer@m-a-m.org.uk) or 2 York Close, Chippenham, SN14 0QB

If for any reason you do not wish to renew your membership, please let Angela know. Your continued support is much appreciated.

**Note this applies to full members only, not current associates.**

## **DriveTech Ltd. Castle Combe**

We have had no further response regarding the proposed DriveTech events at Castle Combe. Therefore, we will not book anything for this year unless a number of people approach us declaring an interest in a particular event. We need to know how many people would be interested in an event before we book it due to the need to pay a deposit.

We will look into the possibility of another archery event to be held in the spring and trips to motor museums: watch this space. If you have any ideas for speakers, trips or events please contact Helen at [events.coordinator@m-a-m.org.uk](mailto:events.coordinator@m-a-m.org.uk).

## **Snow**

Thank you very much to Pat, the ed., and Mike for these pictures of their gardens during the snowy period. We hope the weather did not inconvenience you too much. I have not received any stories about difficult/interesting driving experiences so I will assume everyone was sensible and stayed at home! If you have anything you would like to share please contact Luke at [roundabout.editor@m-a-m.org.uk](mailto:roundabout.editor@m-a-m.org.uk)



## Committee News

If you have any comments on the Committee's News then please contact Luke Pickett in the first instance, at [roundabout.editor@m-a-m.org.uk](mailto:roundabout.editor@m-a-m.org.uk).

### Information regarding the Chairman and Treasurer

We have still not had anyone come forward for the following positions:

**Chairman** with effect from 19<sup>th</sup> May 2011

**Treasurer** with immediate effect

The Committee is already discussing the process of disbanding the Group. If we cannot fill these positions by the AGM on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2011 **the Group WILL fold**: it is a legal requirement that we have both of these Officers in place for the Group to be able to function. If you think you would be able to help out in either of these roles please contact Luke Pickett in the first instance, at [roundabout.editor@m-a-m.org.uk](mailto:roundabout.editor@m-a-m.org.uk), or speak to a Committee Member at a Group Social Evening. A job description for each role appears below. Graham would particularly like someone to take over the Treasurer's role as a matter of urgency. Thank you.

### Job Descriptions/Main Roles

#### **Chairman & Treasurer**

- To encourage and assist motorists to become members of the Institute (publicity)
- To foster and maintain interest in the Institute amongst members (i.e. talk to members at our Group Social Evenings)
- To attend, as much as possible, monthly Committee Meetings (currently held in Trowbridge on the Tuesday evening of the week before the Group Social Evening, lasting around 1 hour. Venue will be reviewed after AGM)
- To attend, as much as possible, monthly Social Evenings and any organised events
- To regularly check email accounts and reply to necessary messages (provision can be made for those who do not have internet access)

#### **Chairman**

- To chair the monthly Committee Meetings and the AGM
- To take a lead role in introducing speakers and welcoming guests and visitors at Group Social Evenings
- To develop ideas for road safety and other events which further the objects of the Group (i.e. suggest possibilities for publicity and events for members)

#### **Treasurer**

- To collect monies for organised events and Social Evenings and pay into bank account
- To pay bills for organised events, Riverside Club hire and Web fees
- To reclaim tax money from the Charity Commission in May/June (1 hour's additional work)
- To maintain up-to-date accounts and keep the Committee informed of income and expenditure. Also to produce accounts for the AGM

Approximate time required to fulfil this roles (per month):

	<b>Committee Meeting</b>	<b>Social Evening</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>	<b>Banking/Accounts</b>	<b>Email Checking</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Chairman</b>	1 hour	2 hours	Max 30 min	N/A	30 mins	<b>4 hours</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	1 hour	2 hours	N/A	1 hour	10 mins	<b>4 h 10m</b>

### Library Books

I shall not be at the January Meeting Evening, as Ian and I will be in Bournemouth at the Bournemouth International Centre watching the UK Dancing Championships. Hope the judges get the right results this year!!!! I will see you on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> February, so you have another month to read your Library items.

Pat



## MoT Test Review must answer key consumer and road safety questions

The IAM [has] welcomed the new government's commitment to a wholesale review of the MoT.

Neil Greig, IAM Director of Policy and Research said: "With MoT failure rates of around 21% for three year old cars it is essential that the underlying reasons for so many relatively new cars failing are investigated before any changes are made to MoT test frequency."

The key questions the IAM want to see answered by the review are:

- Why are first-test pass rates in some European countries better at four years than UK pass rates after three years?
- Does the three-year UK MoT test unnecessarily "gold plate" the European minimum requirement for roadworthiness – at a cost to UK motorists of £465 million a year?
- Would the application of European minimum standards be enough to guarantee roadworthiness of UK cars?
- Is there any evidence that accidents due to vehicle failure are greater in countries that wait four years for a first compulsory roadworthiness test?
- In the UK, only garages carry out tests *and* supply the parts and labour needed to rectify faults. In some European countries, testing and rectifying procedures are separated - should we consider the introduction of independent testing centres?

Mr Greig continued: "When three-year warranties and service agreements are common, a high rate of MoT failure does beg all these questions and more: 'Is it because garages do the MoT test *before* the three-year warranty service instead of after it, which fuels motorists' suspicion that the MoT is being used to show that the service has been done properly?', 'Manufacturers' service schedules do not cover all the points needed to pass a MoT test – why not?' and finally 'Are high failure rates down to motorists failing to maintain their cars properly?'"

### First-time MoT failure rates (2007), supplied by VOSA

In 2007, 21.6 per cent (580,754) of three-year old cars failed their first test. Among 836,646 individual failure faults, the top 10 were:

1 Lighting and signalling	271,567
2 Tyres and wheels	155,489
3 Drivers view of the road (Cracked/chipped windscreens, other obstructions)	120,095
4 Brakes	110,327
5 Steering and suspension	99,798
6 Fuel and emissions	23,634
7 Reg plates and VIN (vehicle identification number)	19,047
8 Seatbelts	11,271
9 Body and structure	7,705
10 Road wheels (loose, missing wheel nuts etc)	5,746

### European comparisons

Figures supplied to the IAM Trust by European motoring organisations show that in some countries where they apply the EU-minimum four years for the first roadworthiness test, the failure rate is lower than in the UK (21.6 per cent), e.g. France 5.61 per cent, Switzerland 17.5 per cent and Norway 19.9 per cent. However, the failure rate in Spain is higher than the UK, at 32 per cent. In countries that also test for the first time at three years, failure rates are far lower than in the UK (Germany 4.8 per cent and Austria 10 per cent).

## **Winter tyres: tyre-some or an en-tyre-ly good idea?**

The IAM offers advice on the pros and cons of using winter tyres, with more cold weather arriving in the UK.

IAM Chief Examiner Peter Rodger, said: "In countries where severe winter weather conditions are more or less guaranteed, it is quite normal for drivers to switch to winter tyres for the duration of the cold season. This practice has not been commonly taken up in the UK because harsh winters are fairly unusual, despite experience to the contrary over the last two years. There are four options available in the UK: winter tyres, all-season tyres, snow chains and snow socks. None of these are considered alterations to a car so shouldn't affect your insurance premium, although it is a good idea to make your insurance provider aware."

There are two main differences between winter and normal tyres. Winter tyres have a different tread pattern of wider grooves and narrow slits at the edges of the tread area, which combine to give better grip on snow and ice. The second difference is the material the tyre is made of. The rubber used for the tread section on standard tyres gets stiffer as the temperature drops, and grip starts to reduce below seven degrees Celsius. Winter tyres use a different material which stays soft and grippy to well below zero. Tyres made with this rubber will carry either a snowflake or a mountain as a symbol on the sidewall.

Winter tyres will not cause a car to fail the MOT test, however they do have drawbacks in terms of storage and cost. Most European drivers who make the switch to winter rubber have two sets of wheels and tyres so that they can change over easily. However even getting steel wheels for the winter, instead of the alloys the car comes with, will cost the owner upwards of £500. Changing to winter tyres permanently is an option, but is unadvisable as winter tyres have less grip once the weather warms up, will wear out more quickly and the car will use more fuel.

A compromise solution available to drivers who want some extra grip for the winter, but don't want the expense or inconvenience of two sets of wheels is to fit a set of all-season tyres. As a result of the rubber compound used and tread they can be used all year round as the name implies, but like any compromise they will not be as good as standard tyres in summer or winter tyres in snow and ice. Because they use the same rubber compound as winter tyres, they should have the snowflake or mountain symbol, but may also have a sun symbol or be marked "M+S" (Mud and Snow).

An alternative to changing tyres is to carry snow chains or snow socks to fit when the snow gets deep. Snow socks are a relatively recent innovation; made of a strong fabric which grips snow, they stretch to fit over the tyre. Either of these can be used with standard tyres and they fit quite easily into a corner of the boot, or garage in summer.

Snow chains are more effective than socks, but do have a few drawbacks. Chains increase the width of the tyre and may affect the suspension, ABS brakes, or wheel arch on a turn, but the owner's handbook or a dealer will be able to tell you if chains can be fitted. They can also be a chore to fit and anyone buying them should practice fitting them before the bad weather sets in. Driving with snow chains on a clear road surface could cause damage, and be an offence, so you mustn't fit them until there is a blanket of snow and you must stop as soon as the snow has gone and remove them. Expect to pay around £50 for a set of economy chains to carry in the boot for emergencies, and up to a couple of hundred pounds for a heavy duty set suitable for regular use.

Snow socks, on the other hand, are slightly cheaper to buy – typically about £40 upwards – they are much easier to fit and will give sufficient grip for most snowy conditions in the UK. They do not damage roads, although they will wear out very quickly if driven for any distance on tarmac, so should be removed as soon as it is safe to do so. Both chains and socks should be washed as soon as is practical after use to get rid of dirt and salt that will otherwise corrode them.

Mr Rodger continued: "With extremes of cold weather being unusual here, and the UK government showing no signs of making winter tyres compulsory, there is no obligation to invest in them. Nevertheless, a set of winter tyres could be a sensible option for some UK motorists, for example those who live at high altitude or in remote areas. For the rest of us, whether the cost is justified depends on individual circumstances such as annual mileage and whether you have the option to avoid driving in extreme conditions."

## Make continuous improvement your New Year's resolution

Instead of letting another resolution join the others consigned to the rubbish bin of your memory by mid-January, why not do something simple that could make a huge difference to your life. Make 2011 the year when you advance your on-road skills, to improve your driving, riding or cycling enjoyment and the safety of you and those around you.

Peter Rodger, IAM Chief Examiner said; "Continuous personal development is often top of the mind at this time of year, but our skill as a driver, rider or cyclist can get taken for granted. Whichever way you travel, make doing it more safely and efficiently your goal for the new year:"

1. Research has found that nearly half of women and more than a third of men feel their confidence would be boosted by taking an advanced driving course. *Skill for Life*, the course for which the IAM is most famously known, is available at £139 for car drivers and motorcyclists, and is a great way of improving confidence, safety, and even gaining reduced insurance premiums
2. The Department of Health recommends that people should take part in moderately intensive activity lasting 30 minutes at least five days a week. Cycling is a great candidate for this, but if you don't yet feel confident getting out and about on your bike, take a look at the IAM's *How to be a better cyclist*, or take some training, with three courses to suit all levels of riding experience
3. Motorcycling is fun and offers a sense of freedom that just can't be found in a car, but it is also potentially a lot more dangerous. For new riders of sub 125cc motorcycles and scooters, Road Rider Plus is a half-day training assessment with a qualified, professional MCITA trainer, designed to build up your experience post CBT, but pre-test
4. With post-test training in countries such as Austria showing results of a 30 per cent reduction in young driver fatalities, building up experience through education is the way forward. The IAM would like to see extra training made compulsory but in the meantime why not try *Momentum*, a new young driver product soon to be available from the IAM. The programme consists of two parts; an online assessment that can be completed in the comfort of your own home, and a 60 minute on-road, general assessment by a qualified IAM examiner. With no test involved, this is a great way of assessing how good you already are, and areas you could improve on
5. Enjoying safe driving into old age is the key to freedom and access to facilities so there has never been a better time to try *Drive Check 55*, the IAM assessment for the more mature driver
6. And most importantly? Get out and practice. Research shows that women living with a partner are more likely to let them take the wheel on long journeys together, and are also less confident. Women are quite likely to be left as the primary driver later on in life, so take the initiative now, and gain as much experience and confidence as possible

### Worst Driver Award

And the winner is...



## **Closing the gender gap among drivers**

*Who's in the driving seat?*, a new study of gender differences from the IAM, has found that women and men aren't so different when it comes to driving behaviours and attitudes. Most of the men and women surveyed\* enjoy driving, and rate themselves to be confident, considerate and safe behind the wheel, but almost twice as many men as women claim to be very confident.

Neil Greig, IAM Director of Policy and Research said: "Despite the many myths attributed to drivers of either sex, it's clear from our survey that both have a similar approach to driving. Men and women are equally likely to admit to speeding, poor parking behavior or losing their temper. However, almost a quarter of women say that being a passenger with their partner in the driving seat leads to them feeling less relaxed."

Men are more likely to take responsibility for car maintenance and legal documentation of both cars in two-car households, with over half of women claiming their partner carries out routine maintenance. When going out for the day, in households where both partners drive, the man is much more likely to drive, often depriving women of the opportunity to gain and maintain driving experience and confidence. However this pattern is reversed when it comes to a night out, when the man is usually happy for the woman to drive. Both men and women feel that their confidence could be boosted by taking an advanced driving course, with nearly half of women, and more than a third of men believing it would improve their driving skills.

Mr Greig added: "The fact that so many women believe in the strength of driver training is encouraging. Single women are significantly more likely than single men to have a car, and while women may drive less while in a relationship, if – as is quite likely – they eventually become the primary driver, advanced driver training would help to increase their skills and confidence on the roads."

The IAM offers the following advice to women for safer, more confident driving:

- Be assertive – take the wheel more often to build up driving experience and confidence. Women are more nervous than men when driving in bad weather, in fast-moving traffic, close to lorries and on motorways, but valuable experience can be gained by opting to drive as much as possible, and not always deferring to a partner on longer journeys
- Be confident – women are considerably less likely to have an accident than men, and are at less risk of violent assault after leaving the car, so don't be afraid to drive purely because of perceived risk
- Be skilful – by being more aware of the threats presented by other vehicles, and knowing how to put yourself in a better position to avoid or deal with them, advanced driver training will make you a more confident and safer driver

Half of the men and women surveyed say they occasionally speed or lose their temper with other drivers, but next to none are willing to admit using a hand-held mobile phone while driving, or to driving after drinking. When it comes to parking around a quarter of both sexes say they either regularly or occasionally park where they should not.

"The findings are positive, and dispel a lot of previously held misconceptions, particularly about women drivers. While women are still more nervous in certain environments, such as in fast-moving traffic and bad weather, we encourage them to take the steering wheel more often, and to get as much practice as possible. Women are significantly more comfortable using their car at night, than walking or using public transport, and for this reason they should do everything they can to be as confident in their cars as possible," Mr Greig concluded.

\* Research conducted by Lake Research. The study surveyed 520 men and 480 women.

## Triple whammy for drivers in New Year warns IAM

The IAM is warning that serious deterioration in the condition of many UK roads, due to severe winter weather, could be even worse than last year as the country's roads thaw out. The pothole-ridden state of the UK's roads coincides with a double increase in the price of running a vehicle, with a 0.76 p increase in fuel duty on 1 January and the VAT increase to 20 per cent on the 4th.

Neil Greig, IAM Director of Policy and Research, said: "Drivers will be rightly incensed that cutbacks on essential road spending are taking place while they are being forced to dig deeper to stay mobile. A car is **not** a luxury item and if running costs go up, the household budget will have to be cut elsewhere to compensate."

The IAM want some of the new duties and taxes to be earmarked for road repairs and road safety measures. Every year the government raises more than £25billion in fuel tax and £13billion in VAT from road users. It makes long-term economic sense to keep investing in better roads now to save even higher bills in the future.

Mr Greig continued: "While cuts to the budget for road repairs are frustrating drivers must learn how to deal with the state of the roads today, so bear in mind the following tips for safely navigating potholes and broken surfaces":

- Leave plenty of room between you and the vehicle in front so that you can see the road surface before you drive or ride over it
- If you do hit a pothole, check your tyres once you've stopped. Examine the inner as well as the outer tyre wall, which may have been damaged
- Get the wheel alignment (tracking) checked as well; an impact with a pothole can easily disturb the adjustment, resulting in rapid tyre wear and affecting the car's handling
- Avoid suddenly pulling out to avoid a pothole – there might be a motorcyclist trying to get past you, or you could enter the path of an oncoming vehicle
- Potholes can be even more dangerous for cyclists and motorcyclists; give them plenty of room to steer past them. They are entitled to a wobble and would appreciate not having a motorist trying to overtake as they are taking avoiding action
- Potholes tend to reappear in the same place as previous repairs fail - remember where you've seen one and expect it to be there again
- Be extra vigilant on roads with lots of lorries, and around bus stops. Extra pressure is put on the road surface wherever heavy vehicles stop, start or turn

Mr Greig continued: "Anticipation, planning and good forward vision will help you spot that lethal pothole and help avoid unwanted extra bills for new tyres and wheels. You can reduce your running costs right away by adopting advanced driving techniques or taking an eco-driving course which have been shown to deliver immediate savings of up to 30 per cent in fuel consumption."

## **Young drivers run over more than a third of pedestrian casualties**

The massive reduction in fatalities within our two most vulnerable age groups is the key finding of *Younger and older road users*, published [recently] by the IAM as the latest in its series of IAM Motoring Facts 2010/2011.

Fatalities have fallen 33 per cent in the 16-19 year old bracket, 25 per cent for drivers in their 70s, and 22 per cent for drivers aged 80 and over since 2008.

Neil Greig, IAM Director of Policy and Research, said: "While these reductions are really positive, we must continue to support these drivers, who are among the most vulnerable on our roads. The fatality rate continues to be highest for 16-19-year olds, followed by the over 80s, but for very different reasons."

"The greatest risk to the oldest age group on the road is as a pedestrian. In comparison, younger people are much more at risk as a driver or as a passenger in a car driven by a young driver. Pedestrian risk increases from two per cent of those injured aged between 20 and 50, to around nine per cent aged 80 and over. The greatest risk to pedestrians is car drivers under 30 who are involved in more than a third of pedestrian fatalities."

During their teens and twenties, the risk of young drivers being killed halves every five years as they gain more driving experience. Mr Greig continued: "This lends weight to the IAM's call for post-test training to be made compulsory in a form similar to that of the system in countries like Austria<sup>\*1</sup>, where reductions of up to 30 per cent in young male driver fatalities have been achieved. If new drivers can be kept alive during this most dangerous stage of their driving career, the risk of them becoming another killed or seriously injured statistic reduces significantly."

Despite widespread beliefs to the contrary, older drivers are no more likely to be involved in an injury crash than middle aged drivers, and are much less at risk than drivers aged under 30. However, the risk of being killed as a car occupant increases from about 0.6 per cent of those injured aged between 30 and 50, to over three per cent aged 80 and over. This is generally a result of age-related frailty; older people are more likely to be injured in a crash and are less likely to recover. Between 20 and 50 years of age, the rate of deaths declines for all road users except for motorcyclists which remains almost constant over this period.

"Young male drivers continue to be the most high-risk group, and are more than twice as likely to be involved in a fatal or serious injury crash as young female drivers. A renewed focus on young drivers, which provides them with opportunities to gain further experience in a controlled and safe environment is of utmost importance", said Mr Greig.

<sup>\*1</sup> The Austrian system ensures new drivers have at least three further contacts with qualified instructors during the first 12 to 18 months of their driving career. After taking the test an initial assessment drive is undertaken to gain knowledge of a driver's experience so far and to highlight any deficiencies. There is then a visit to a Road Safety Centre to demonstrate handling in the wet, speed into corners and the impact of speed on stopping distances. Discussion sessions are also held which take a psychological approach, talking about peer pressure and the main risks to young drivers. The final element is an eco-drive assessment.

## 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](http://www.m-a-m.org.uk)

## CONTACT US

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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

Any opinions expressed in this or any other newsletter published by the Melksham and District Group of Advanced Motorists are those of an individual or the editor. They should not be taken to represent the views of the IAM, its officers or the Melksham and District Group Committee, unless made explicit. As such, no legal responsibility can be accepted for any statement. The articles are published in good faith. Members are requested to seek confirmation of event details before attending, since regrettably last minute changes to plans do occur.