

MINI ROUNDABOUT

March 2011

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

March 17th	Biodiesel - Steve Sharp, Diesel Dan - The Green Fuel Man
April 2nd	Observer Training Day, Bristol (see page 2)
April 21st	Sandra Brandon, Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA)
April 23rd	Archery Taster Session, Bath Archers, 1:45pm (see page 2)
May 19th	21 st Annual General Meeting Speaker: David Douch on the topic of Vehicle Occupant Security
June 16th	DriveCheck Night
July 21st	Skittles Night, The White Hart, Atworth, 7:30pm (see page 2)
August	No social evening during August

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

Chairman

We are still looking for a Chairman to take over from Paul after the AGM in May. A full job description can be found in the February *Mini-Roundabout*, which is available on our website. If you would be interested in this role, please contact a member of the Committee. There is a possibility of sharing the role if you cannot commit to a full-time position. There are only two months to go until the AGM!

Observer Training Day – Saturday 2nd April, Bristol

The Bristol Group are holding a training event on 2nd April for trainee and existing observers. The event is being organised and run by our Regional Group Coordinator, Richard Furneaux, and our Staff Examiner, Andy Poulton. If you are interested in becoming an observer this would be a good time to start. For more information contact our Chief Car Observer, David Major, at chief.car.observer@m-a-m.org.uk.

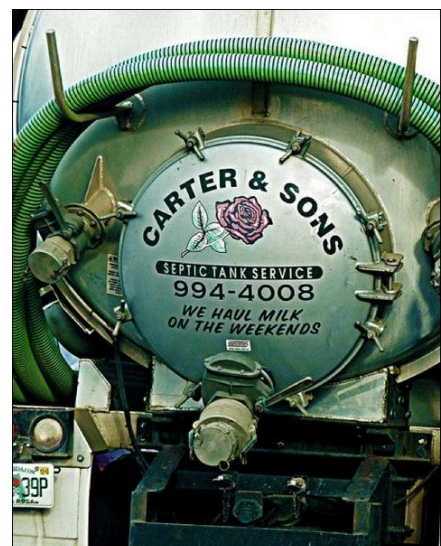
Archery Taster Session – Saturday 23rd April

We have booked another Archery Taster Session at Bath Archers, Batheaston, starting at 1:45pm on 23rd April. The taster session will cost £15 per person, with the opportunity to continue onto the beginners course for an additional £40 for six lessons (held on Saturday afternoons, or possibly Monday evenings). All equipment will be provided. If you are interested in the taster session, or beginners course, or you would like further information, please contact Paul Wilkins on 01225 775900.

Skittles Night – Thursday 21st July, 7:30pm

Our annual skittles night will be held at The White Hart, Bath Road, Atworth, Melksham, SN12 8JR. Cost: £5.25 per head to include a basket meal. You can choose from: sausage and chips, scampi and chips, ploughman's, chicken and chips, mushroom stroganoff or vegetarian sausage and chips. Please sign up, indicating your chosen meal, at social evenings or by contacting Helen at events.coordinator@m-a-m.org.uk. Payment should be handed to Graham or Douglas at social evenings, or sent to Douglas Colborne at Fregates, Church Road, Derry Hill, Calne, SN11 9NR, no later than **Friday 15th July**. Cheques should be made payable to 'Melksham Advanced Motorists'.

There... I Fixed It



Thanks to Pat for this picture of a septic tank lorry:
not sure I'd be calling them to deliver my milk
(note the tag line under the telephone number!)

February Social Evening – Legal Matters Talk

Many thanks to Mike for providing this report:

At our February meeting we welcomed Anne from the firm Collective Legal Solutions who gave a very interesting presentation on the areas her company specialises in: wills, probate, planning for care provision for the elderly and inheritance tax.

Her first point was how important it is for everyone to have a current, valid will especially for those whose family circumstances are unusual or complicated. Some examples of the difficulties that can be caused by dying intestate were sufficient to convince. It is also important to ensure that wills are kept current to allow for changes in the law or personal circumstances and her suggestion was that wills should be reviewed every 5 years.

Executors should be chosen carefully and fees charged by solicitors or banks providing this service must be taken into account. The task can be undertaken by trustworthy relatives or friends but although reasonably straightforward it can be time-consuming. For those with young children, a will can be used to nominate guardians and different guardians can be nominated for financial and pastoral care of children in the event of their being orphaned.

Making or reviewing a will is also a good time to think about the possibility of needing care in old age for either mental or physical incapacity. An arrangement called Enduring Power of Attorney used to allow for another person to be able to take over one's financial affairs in the event of mental incapacity. This arrangement has now changed to Lasting Power of Attorney which is split between financial affairs and care needs though any Enduring Power already arranged should still be valid. A will can also be used to protect some of the value of a family home from the requirement to fund a place in a care home by setting up a suitable trust. It is even possible, though more complicated, to shelter some of the value of a home owned by a single person.

The increase in the Inheritance Tax threshold since October 2007 and the fact that a person's allowance is automatically passed on to a spouse has made this tax less of a problem. Unmarried couples must make special provisions in their wills to use the full amount however. For those whose estate will be over the threshold there are still ways to reduce the tax bill but if you are in that happy position you need to keep records of any substantial gifts.

Although a presentation which centred on death and taxes might not seem very appealing our interest was held throughout and there was plenty of food for thought. I for one will certainly be reviewing my arrangements.

Tesco garage petrol sign targeted by pranksters

[Article source: bbc.co.uk]

Eagle-eyed motorists were in for a surprise when pranksters tampered with a petrol station price sign. The 24-hour Tesco garage in Fleetsbridge, Poole, Dorset, was targeted on Sunday morning [20 February]. The unleaded petrol price was changed to 25.9 pence per litre and the letters LOL - which normally stand for Laugh Out Loud - were written below it. The normal price of unleaded petrol at the station is 125.9 pence per litre. Tesco said it had corrected the sign. A spokesman said: "Staff corrected the sign as soon as they were alerted to the prank." The spokesman said it was spotted on Sunday morning and no permanent damage had been caused. Jimmy Skillings, who spotted the prank and took a photograph, said: "I know petrol prices are a joke but this is funny. Whoever did it sure has a sense of humour."



Many motorists 'running on empty'

[Article source: AOL News]

An increasing number of drivers are "running on empty" due to high petrol and diesel costs. Breakdown service Green Flag reported a 40% increase in the number of fuel-related call-outs in the second half of January, compared with the same period last month. A survey by the company shows 48% of drivers had been dangerously close to empty or broke down before reaching the pumps at some point in their lifetime. More than a third of these incidents occurred in the last three months during a period when the price of petrol at the pumps has reached record levels. The poll also shows that more than 30% of drivers have cut down on their motoring to offset rising fuel prices. But only 4 have bought a more fuel-efficient car. Of the 2,110 adults surveyed, those from Northern Ireland had the most fuel-related breakdowns, while younger drivers (aged 18-34) were the ones most likely to run out of petrol.

Dan Robinson, head of Green Flag, said: "There is no hiding from the fact that the constant rises in fuel are affecting drivers nationwide, with almost half now driving on empty. For most, driving is a necessity rather than a choice and despite Government speculation about stability, high fuel prices are here to stay, placing pressure on the motorist's pocket. We encourage motorists to become more vigilant about filling up to ensure they are not left stranded. It's as simple as keeping an eye on your fuel gauge before setting off, no matter if it's a short trip or a long journey."

To flash or not to flash?

Nearly half of drivers admit to flashing their lights to warn other drivers of a speed check, according to an IAM poll of over 4800 motorists. The main reason for doing this is to save another motorist from being caught or fined.

This poll followed the prosecution of a driver [in January], who was fined £175 and ordered to pay £250 costs after warning several approaching cars of a speed check. Nearly 70 per cent of respondents to the poll said that a driver should not be prosecuted for warning others – only 21 per cent believe they should.

IAM chief examiner Peter Rodger said: "The biggest reason for not flashing to warn of a speed check is safety, with 'drivers who speed deserve to be caught and fined' and 'the meaning of the flash could be misinterpreted', each polling a third of the votes from those who don't flash. However, safety was also used as a major justification for those who do flash to warn of speed checks, with nearly 20 per cent saying they 'wanted to avoid a possible collision when drivers see the speed check late and brake harshly in response'. The driver who was prosecuted for using his lights justified his behaviour by stating he used his lights to warn of a hazard."

Flashing appears to be an accepted form of communication between drivers. Nearly 35 per cent of respondents say they 'use their lights to tell other drivers they are giving way to them', and 30 per cent 'use them to thank another driver for giving way to them'. Less than 10 per cent of drivers said that they don't flash at all. Nearly 45 per cent of drivers feel that the Highway Code should contain a standardised code of what flashes mean. The fact that nearly as many people use their lights to thank another driver, as those who use them to invite another driver to come through, suggests there could be confusion as to what message people are trying to get across.

Rodger said: "Reassuringly, fewer than 10 per cent of respondents admit to using their lights aggressively to signal annoyance at what they consider bad behaviour on the other drivers' part. So while the meaning of flashes is fuzzy, at least people don't seem to feel it is an acceptable way to take out anger on other road users."

England tops UK road safety league

England tops the UK road safety league table with the lowest rate for deaths on the roads, ahead of Scotland and Wales, with Northern Ireland firmly at the bottom, according to a report published by the IAM.

The report 'Comparisons -- England's regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland' shows substantial differences in the safety of roads and levels of car ownership around the UK. England's north - south divide is also a significant factor.

In England the north east and the north west are the safest places to drive, while the east Midlands is the most dangerous.

IAM director of policy and research Neil Greig said: "While the UK is now top of the European road safety league, the risk of being killed on UK roads varies considerably around the country. Road deaths in Northern Ireland are twice that of north east England.

"Bringing the worst areas in the UK up to the same level of the best would save many more lives and reduce serious injuries. This should be a prime focus for central, devolved and local government road safety plans."

While England's northern regions are the safest, they are at the bottom of the car ownership league table -- more than a quarter of households don't own a car. Over 80 per cent of households in the south east and the south west own one or more. Overall in England car ownership fell in 2009, in Wales there was no change, and in Scotland there was a modest increase on 2008.

Greig said: "Car ownership is a good measure of prosperity. Regional declines in ownership and the fact that ownership is much higher in the south of England reflects the UK's economic and employment trends."

1. The UK road safety league table 2009 – source: 'Comparisons - England's regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland'. Figures exclude London.

Fatal casualty rate – all road users 2009

Fatalities per 100,000 people

UK	3.8
England	3.6
Scotland	4.2
Wales	4.2
Northern Ireland	6.4

England

North east	2.8
North west	3.4
South east	3.5
South west	3.9
Yorks and Humberside	3.9
West Midlands	4.1
East of England	4.1
East Midlands	5.1

2. Car ownership 2008/9 – source: 'Comparisons - England's regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland'. Figures exclude London.

Cars per 1000 population

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
UK		
England	470	466
Scotland	435	436
Wales	482	481
Northern Ireland	476	n/a

England

North east	404	404
North west	468	458
Yorks and Humberside	433	428
East Midlands	487	486
West Midlands	509	505
East of England	506	506
South east	540	543
South west	520	524

Cuts to road safety budgets will cost money and lives, warns IAM

The IAM welcomes [the] report on road safety by the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (Pacts). IAM director of policy and research Neil Greig said: "Cutting budgets for road safety is short-sighted economics. Meeting casualty reduction targets has halved road deaths over the past 20 years, saving the economy around £50 billion. Achieving similar targets for road deaths by 2020 will save 2,500 lives and over £4 billion. Investing road safety saves the country money so funding being taken away from this area will ultimately cost money and lives. The Parliamentary Council is right to call for continued investment in road safety and demanding casualty reduction targets."

The UK tops the world road safety league, improving from 6th in 2007 and 4th in 2008. The number of people killed on Britain's roads each year is now below 2000. Each fatal road accident costs the UK economy £1.79 million in lost output and health care. Every life saved is a direct benefit to society and reduces the number of families who will suffer personal grief from the loss of a loved one for years after the event.

How are motorists saving fuel?

[Article source: bbc.co.uk]

Petrol prices have risen to record levels and the UK government has hinted it may postpone a planned 1p fuel duty increase due next month. But how much have driving habits already changed in an effort to save fuel? In 2000, fuel protests sparked by rising petrol prices nearly brought parts of the country to a standstill. The price at the pump was about 80 pence a litre. Now, a little more than 10 years later, the price has broken the £1.30 (\$2.10) mark, and people are responding in quite a different way. They are changing the way they drive. It's not surprising that motorists are getting savvy in trimming their fuel bill, with the tank of a family saloon costing nearly £70 (\$113), at a time when rising living costs are squeezing household budgets in other ways.

Chancellor George Osborne has hinted that a 1p fuel duty hike due next month will be scrapped, after the highest oil prices since 2008 sent prices at the pump to record levels. But motorists are not waiting for help, but helping themselves. While eco-driving has long been favoured by those keen to trim their budgets or reduce harmful CO₂ emissions, the steady increase in petrol prices over the past year seems to have influenced habits more widely. One key change appears to be that people are making fewer journeys, although how much is due to fuel consumption is difficult to say. Figures supplied by the Department of Transport suggest that congestion on motorways and trunk roads has been falling. In the year ending December 2010, the provisional figure for average vehicle delay on the slowest 10% of journeys was 3.55 minutes per 10 miles, a fall of 9% since March 2008.

Adrian Tink of the RAC is in no doubt that motorists began cutting their driving towards the end of last year, as they felt the pinch. In a survey of 1,500 drivers last month, 75% said they had reduced car use. "We're seeing record levels of people walking and biking. Evidence from the last couple of quarters is that sale of petrol is dropping. People are buying less fuel. A lot of people are combining journeys and making shorter ones. Instead of popping out twice they are popping out once. People are doing fewer longer journeys, because they are looking at alternatives like the train." They are also driving more slowly, he says, with anecdotal evidence that average motorway speeds are down. "We have a lot of patrols and customers contacting us and it's absolutely clear that people are changing their habits because they need to reduce the money they're spending on the tank."

Fewer car journeys means less pollution, fewer road accidents and shorter traffic jams, all of which would be welcomed by many. It's a point Mr Tink is happy to acknowledge. Economising is not a bad thing, he says, but there's a danger that people are being priced out of their cars, in a society that for 20 years has been designed around them.

The AA reports the same picture, of falling petrol sales and fewer car journeys. Spokesman Luke Bosdet says petrol sales in the third quarter of 2010 were down by 13% compared with 2007. "We do surveys of 15,000 AA members and two thirds say they're cutting back on car use or reducing other household spending to absorb the extra costs. Our research suggests people are cutting down on motorway speeds and sticking to the slower lanes. There's a degree of danger in going too slow if lorries come up behind you. But drivers that might have done 80 are now doing 70 and that means a significant saving."

A rule of thumb often followed is that 50-55mph is the optimum speed, says Mr Bosdet, but it depends very much on the car. Driving at 80mph will cost you about 10% more in fuel than driving at 70mph, says a spokeswoman for the Department for Transport. This week, the use of speed limits as a tool to control fuel consumption was highlighted in Spain, where the speed limit was reduced from 120km/h (75mph) to 110km/h (68mph). Spain is heavily dependent on imported fuel and 13% of its oil usually comes from Libya.

One family in Exeter has been putting these principles into practice. The Boultts have saved 54% from their fuel bill since last summer, which amounts to an annual saving of £619 for the two-car family. Some of that saving is down to cutting down on car journeys, says mum Heather, a 42-year-old community centre manager, but about two-thirds is because of changes to the way she and husband Martin drive, after some eco-driving lessons from Shell as part of the Shell Smarter Drivers Initiative. "There were little things like putting more air in the tyres. And I had always felt it was good to fill the tank but if you half fill it then the car is lighter and you use less fuel. I used to pull up at traffic lights and think they would go green in a little while, and leave my feet on the clutch and accelerator, but now I put it into neutral, the handbrake on and take my feet off the accelerator, which can save you about £10-20 a week. And driving more smoothly is important. The more you are pressing the accelerator pedal, the more petrol you're running through the car, so if you keep it at a constant speed, at 40mph instead of 50, 30, 60, 20." Leaving about 10 minutes earlier for work, before 8am instead of after, means avoiding traffic jams and driving with an empty boot helps too.

Behaviour at the petrol pump has changed too, according to research by Asda supermarket. Based on thousands of transactions nationwide in the two years leading up to January this year, there was an increase of 18% in the number of people filling their tank only to a round pound, like £10 or £20, not to the full tank. And the average spend at the pump has fallen from £25 to £20, says the Retail Motor Industry Federation, and more customers are paying with cash and coins. It's all part of a cultural shift which has made fuel consumption a subject now regularly heard at dinner parties, says Maria McCarthy, author of *The Girls' Car Handbook* and proud owner of an N-reg Vauxhall Astra. Since January it's been the number one issue. The big discussion is how long can you make a fuel tank last? People are starting to talk about it like they used to talk about property prices. In my line of work, people in social situations don't usually talk to me about my work, but now they do. We have these cultural shifts and they recently reached a tipping point and everyone is now concerned about fuel consumption."

Some motorways have taken on an eerie quiet, says motoring expert and broadcaster Quentin Willson, speaking while driving. "We're going a lot slower, we're not doing... the pleasure journeys. I'm currently on the M6 [motorway], it's three o'clock and it's absolutely clear. I'm doing 70mph and it's fine. Last night, I was on the M20 and it was eerily quiet. So I think we're seeing a real change. People aren't driving, doing the stuff they used to do, because they're saving fuel."

While environmentalists would welcome reduced car use and reduced CO₂, says Willson, it also means reduced VAT, corporation tax and money to the Treasury. The implications of a further rise in fuel duty would affect all aspects of the economy, increasing prices in general and ultimately costing jobs.

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

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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.

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