

# Hull & East Riding Group of Advanced Motorists

[www.iam.org.uk/hull](http://www.iam.org.uk/hull)

Group Number 4029

Registered Charity Number 1070176

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# Newsletter

NEWS | VIEWS | LAW | LETTERS

## Autumn 2008



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## From the Editor

For some time now, our Group web site has had a section from which users can download archived newsletters. For my own convenience, I've always placed the current newsletter, in colour, in the archive at publication time. This makes a bit of a nonsense calling the section 'Newsletter Archive' as the current newsletter is available to anyone from the publication date.

When I re-wrote the web site earlier this year, I included a 'Members Only' section for no other reason than I could. Clearly, nobody visits it, or wants to, because no one has ever asked me for the login but never-the-less I'm searching for a use for it.

From this edition, the current newsletter, in colour, will be available from the member's only area whereas all genuinely archived newsletters will be available to any user only in monochrome from the Newsletter Archive section. This serves a few purposes.

- It gives the member's only area something to do.
- It adds some exclusivity for Group members and associates.
- It is a carrot to retain Group members especially in the light of nationally increased membership fees.

To access these pages use the login located on the black banner below the heading picture. The username, which is the same for all Group members, is *member* and the password is *hullander*. As this printed newsletter is the only place the username and password will be given and the newsletter circulation beyond Group members or associates is likely to be limited, essentially only members and associates will have access this restricted area. I would suggest that the new, changed login details are provided annually to those members who renew their Group membership at the end of January.

Our web site continues to deliver enquiries from the public. August alone produced eight new enquiries. Of course it remains to be seen how many of these turn into new associates.

Alan

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If you would like to make a contribution to the Newsletter, the closing date for the next publication is

**Friday 5th December.**

You can contact me any way you like, post; phone; e-mail; call round or just hand it over at a meeting.

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## Chairman's Chatter

As most of you will be already aware, the IAM annual subscription (nationally and not our Group subscription) is increasing to £30, or £28 if paid by direct debit. Quite an increase. Now it is not my intention here to discuss the why and wherefore of this increase: the President comments upon the matter elsewhere in the Newsletter. Suffice to say that I consider the subs the equivalent of a donation to charity. However, this started a train of thought that began with the IAM as a charity and ended up with what our Group contributes to this "charity". By this I do not necessarily mean a financial contribution but in the time and effort given freely and generously by committee members, observers and senior observers, and nominated post holders. When you stop and think about it, it is quite a significant commitment. In a world where everyone seems permanently busy and in a hurry (witness the speeding on our roads), the never failing enthusiasm and time given by these volunteers, mostly busy people themselves, is generous indeed. None of them do it for the glory, and certainly not for any financial reward, but out of public spiritedness, the idea that in some way they are contributing to the general good. In our particular case, road safety. All they would like is a word of thanks every now and then. As Chairman, I fully appreciate the work that they put in to ensure the very successful running of the Group.

Thanks to you all.

Neil

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## **50th Wedding Celebrated in Style**

I'm sure the Group would like to join me in expressing our congratulations to Arline and Bill Cundill, our Host, who, earlier this year, celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary: that's 50 years for those who may not know.



They marked the event by enduring the hardships of a Mediterranean cruise. Apparently the days of weevil enriched biscuits and rum are long passed and they both had a really enjoyable, leisurely time being waited on hand and foot. (Just like being at home then, Bill!)

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## **Data Protection Act**

Names, addresses and supplied information from members, associates and individuals requesting information, is kept on a computer held by the Membership Secretary, or assigned persons, for the sole purpose of Group related business. This information will not be made available to other organisations or individuals except when disclosure is required by law.

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## **It Only Takes A 'Moment'**

I suppose this could be a familiar tale to many. My wife and I had an enjoyable day out, drove from Newbald to Sutton Bank and walked a few surplus calories off. The four legged member of the family had a great time, running about, sniffing, generally doing what dogs do. We went to Thirsk for a coffee and sticky bun (got to replace the calories somehow) and drove home at which point, we realised we had nothing in for tea. Being the chivalrous man I am I suggested my wife relax in the bath while I nip to Tesco's to buy food. Strange to relate, she was in full agreement with this division of duties.

It is called "Having a moment", but have you ever been shopping and purchased completely the wrong item? We've all done this, but when the wrong item is 40 litres of petrol, and my car has the "TCDI" badge on the back, you'll see where this is going.

Fortunately, I realised before I started the engine, and let out a fair few expletives which are censored to protect our more sensitive readers. About an hour later, the very very very nice man in his truck arrived. AA rules quite correctly say that normal patrol staff are not allowed to do any work on my car in that situation, but of course, he could tow the car somewhere. The choices were a local independent garage, but many will not clean out fuel because of the need to store the waste in a proper safe storage facility. The days of pouring it into an oil drum in the corner and burning it off are long gone. Second choice was the main Ford dealer who would almost certainly do the job, but charge main dealer prices. Third choice, was to tow my car home, and call the AA Fuel Assist Team and ask for a mobile unit to call round.

One tow, one phone call and a couple of days later, the Fuel Assist vehicle arrived. With the van with "Fuel Assist" in big letters on the side, and the warning signs saying "Fuel Transfer, No Smoking", you can just imagine every neighbour's curtains twitching. However, he efficiently drained my tank, and put some fresh fuel in, and £150 plus VAT plus the cost of fresh fuel later, all was well.

I did enquire how many Fuel Assist vehicles the AA have. 20 in England and Wales, doing five jobs a day each. In London, they are on double shifts, and covering up to 10 jobs per vehicle per day. They had another 20 vehicles on order, and staff being trained to do the work. Simple maths means at least 100 jobs per day, 500 per week, 26 000 per year. The RAC will be doing similar numbers, and then there is the garages as well. Some newspaper articles put the number of mistakes at well over 100 000 per year, which is very believable.

We all know that a diesel nozzle will not fit to a petrol car because it is the bigger than the fuel tank filler tube. Being £200 poorer, I now consciously think "DIESEL" when I pull up by the pump. But has anyone got a fool proof



method of ensuring I don't put petrol in a diesel car? Answers in the next newsletter.

Keith Lownsbrough

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## World's first sat nav - from 1920

It doesn't speak to you or give live traffic updates, but this is the world's first sat nav - invented in the 1920s.

The Plus Fours Routefinder was designed to be worn on the wrist - relying on good old-fashioned paper maps wound around wooden rollers, which the driver turned en route.

The tiny scrolls also showed the mileage and gave a "stop" instruction at the journey's end.



The device was intended to allow drivers to navigate around the UK, but with so few cars on the roads it never really took off.

Now consigned to the scrap heap of history, the Routefinder is one of many gadgets patented by inventors who were hoping to strike it rich with their bizarre contraptions.

It's part of a collection of weird and wonderful inventions, all conceived between 1851 and 1951, which have gone on display at the British Library in London.

Well spotted by  
RHT

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## Test Passes and Achievements

Rowland Hardy was pleased to receive his Advanced Driving Certificate from our Chairman, Neil. Tom Smith, Rowland's observer, was unfortunately

unable to stay for the photograph.



David Spencer also received his Advanced Driving Certificate after successfully completing the test.

David received his certificate from our MC for the September meeting, Robert Thomson.

Well done to you both and, to reiterate the earlier comments of our Chairman, sincere thanks to your Observers.





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## Keeping Up Vehicle Standards

It was with great relief that Robert introduced the speaker at the July meeting. The party he had originally arranged to speak was unable to keep his appointment and had to 'ring round' to see if he could persuade someone to re-arrange their schedule and fill in the gap. Clive Allison of VOSA offered to stand in so at very short notice Clive came along and spoke to the Group about his organisation, who they are and what they offer.

Clive firstly explained the origins and previous incarnations of what is now the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency and explained that the organisation provides a range of services to improve road-worthiness of vehicles using the public highways. Clive is a senior vehicle examiner and is based in the Beverley centre: one of two centres covering this area.

Although Clive is attached to the vehicle examination division of VOSA, there are other divisions which deal specifically with licensing, enforcement and compliance, the MOT scheme, accident investigation and technical research and training and education.

The licensing division offers administrative support to the Traffic Commissioners and processes operator license applications for lorries, buses and coaches.

Most car drivers are likely to know of VOSA through the often police assisted roadside stops and inspections of heavy goods vehicles. The mechanical condition of the stopped vehicle is established and, in an enforcement and compliance role, drivers' hours may be checked for adherence to the permitted driving and rest hours.

The whole purpose of the organisation is to improve the safety of vehicles and drivers using the highways in this country and for a few years now, our less affluent members will recall seeing VOSA now appears on the vehicle test certificate required, generally, for motor vehicles more than three years old. VOSA supervise the MOT scheme and ensure that the almost 19,000 garages authorised to carry out these annual tests are maintaining the expected standards. In part, this is achieved through the education and certification of Authorised Examiners and Nominated Testers, monitoring the standard of the MOT garages and if necessary, taking action to ensure the required standard is met.

The public service vehicle (PSV) operators also have their operators licenses issued through VOSA and vehicle inspections are carried out before a PSV is permitted to enter service.

Probably of more interest to the car enthusiast is the testing, inspection and acceptance of home built cars, motorcycles and tricycles, referred to as single vehicle approval. I recall some time ago watching a TV program about a kit car build. At the end of the series the car was taken for a VOSA inspection and the number of points that were checked was unbelievable but with hindsight probably necessary for safety. So if you ever get round to building



that super kit car you always promised yourself, be prepared for a very serious inspection at the end of it! Few vehicles get through without some modification or another to maintain compliance with the rule

books.

VOSA staff also undertake technical investigations if a defect is suspected in a volume produced vehicle. Although vehicle recalls seem to be diminishing, it is likely that if your vehicle is recalled, it is a recommendation established through a VOSA investigation. They also support the police by examining vehicles involved in crashes where mechanical or design defects are suspected.

In short VOSA, an executive agency of the Department for Transport are an active and effective organisation aimed at improving particularly the mechanical quality of the vehicles that use the public highway. We all sort of dread the day we need to take our cars for an MOT but the fear is usually a financial one. Deep down we know the vehicles we drive should meet minimum standards for safety.

Many thanks to Clive for standing in at the last moment and giving the Group a broad insight into the work in which he and his colleagues do.

While VOSA look after that, it falls upon organisations like ours to try and deal with the other vehicle fault. It's the bit that occupies the front, right hand seat in a British car. It seems that although all the authorities and organisations acknowledge that most crashes are caused by a driver's error or attitude rather than a mechanical cause, an organisation like VOSA is run by the government's Department for Transport yet driver improvement has to be done by charitable organisations like the IAM and RoSPA.

Hey Ho.

Alan

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## Who's Who in the Group

|                                    |  |  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Honorary Life Members</b>       | Doug Harrison<br>Dennis Blackburne<br>Eileen Found   |  |
| <b>President</b>                   | Ivor Nicholson   | 875791   |
| <b>Vice Presidents</b>             | Stuart Donald<br>Ken Harbert   | 871443   |
| <b>Chairman</b>                    | Neil Scruton   | 01964 552932   |
| <b>Secretary</b>                   | Andrew Noble   | 627497   |
| <b>Treasurer</b>                   | Beryl Day  | 833351   |
| <b>Associate Coordinator</b>       | Angie Bird   | 01262 488425   |
| <b>Publicity</b>                   | Wendy Robinson   |  |
| <b>Minutes Secretary</b>           | Wendy Robinson   |  |
| <b>Meetings Coordinator</b>        | Robert H Thomson   | 844764   |
| <b>Hosts</b>                       | Bill Cundill<br>Jo Cross   | 643429   |
| <b>Other Committee Members</b>     | Angie Bird<br>Stuart Donald<br>Stephen Mills<br>Paul R Tee<br>Robert H Thomson<br>Frank Watson | 01262 488425<br>667045<br>820797<br>844764<br>823535 |
| <b>Chief Observer</b>              | Ivor Nicholson   | 875791   |
| <b>Senior Observers</b>            | Angie Bird<br>Bill Cundill<br>John Pearce  | 01262 488425<br>643429<br>654165                     |
| <b>Senior Observers (Advisory)</b> | Stuart Donald<br>Doug Harrison   |  |
| <b>Group Shop</b>                  | Ivor Nicholson   | 875791   |
| <b>Refreshment Sales</b>           | Geoff Beecroft   | 781876   |

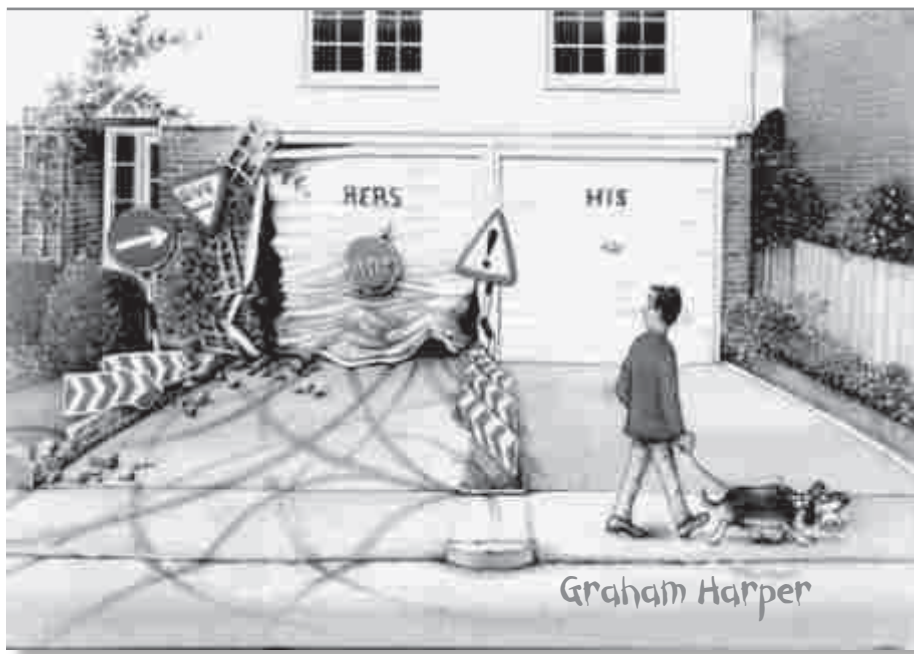
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## **C'est Common Sense, Naturellement**

Neil mentioned at the July meeting that there is now a legal requirement that drivers of vehicles travelling on French roads must carry a fluorescent jacket. There are sufficiently memorable fines in the order of 100 Euros if caught without the required equipment.

I always carry one in my car's just-in-case bag and for the cost of a couple of pounds – never mind this foreign currency – I believe at least one for the driver should be carried whichever country's roads you happen to be travelling on.

Alan



## **Disclaimer**

This newsletter is a forum for Members, Associates and friends of the Kingston Upon Hull and East Riding Group of Advanced Motorists and all are cordially invited to submit articles for inclusion. It should be noted however that a contributor must accept full responsibility and liability for the factual accuracy of any article they submit. Readers should note that an article is likely to reflect the views of the contributor, and its inclusion does not imply endorsement by the IAM, any other individual or organisation unless specifically stated. The editor reserves the right to edit, abridge or reject any submitted contribution.

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## **Teacher Packs 13 into Volvo**

A teacher was banned recently from driving for packing 13 people into a Volvo built for five.

Abraham Gniwosch had 10 in the back - two women with babies on their laps and six children under the age of 10. In the front seat were a man of 28 and a boy of 11. He blamed a sister visiting from New York for pressuring him into taking all the children in a Volvo S70.

Mr Gniwosch was found guilty of dangerous driving and fined £500 with £450 costs, banned from driving for a year and must take an extended re-test.

RHT

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## **Onwards and Upwards**

As reported by Alexandra Wood in the Yorkshire Post in July, a policeman of 23 years service with Humberside Police has been appointed Assistant Chief Constable (Operations).

Stuart Donald has risen through the ranks, serving in each of the force's four divisions, to attain the rank of Divisional Commander for North Lincolnshire in 2006.

He has replaced John Crosse this year, who has moved on to join the National Policing Improvement Agency.

Stuart, one of our IAM Group's two Vice Presidents, was reported to be delighted at being chosen for the role.

Expressing his enjoyment working with colleagues, partners and the Humberside population, he hoped to continue to do his very best to make local communities safer.

He was welcomed to the senior officer team by the Vice Chairman of Humberside Police Authority, Councillor David Rudd, who commented on the confidence with which the Authority had made their choice of candidate, citing the value of Stuart's vast experience and knowledge of policing in Humberside.

I'm sure members of the Hull and East Riding Group of Advanced Motorists would like to join me in congratulating Stuart on his successful promotion.

*Alan, from an article submitted by Robert Thomson*

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## **That's the Long and the Short of It**

A teenage boy had just passed his driving test and inquired of his father if they could discuss his use of the car.

His father said he'd make a deal with his son.

"You bring your grades up from a C to a B average, study your Bible a little, and get your hair cut. Then we'll talk about the car."

The boy thought about that for a moment, decided he'd settle for the offer and they agreed on it.

After about six weeks his father said, "Son, you've brought your grades up and I've observed that you have been studying your Bible, but I'm disappointed you haven't had your hair cut."

The boy said, "You know, Dad, I've been thinking about that, and I've noticed in my studies of the Bible that Samson had long hair, John the Baptist had long hair, Moses had long hair ... and there's even strong evidence that Jesus had long hair."

To this his father replied, "Did you also notice they all walked everywhere they went?"

RHT

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## **At the Risk of Making a Political Statement...**

A driver is stuck in a traffic jam on the motorway.

Nothing is moving.

Suddenly a man knocks on the window.

The driver rolls down his window and asks, 'What's going on?'

'Terrorists down the road have kidnapped Gordon Brown, Alistair Darling, David Miliband and Jack Straw. They're asking for a £10 million ransom otherwise they're going to douse them with petrol and set them on fire.

We're going from car to car, taking up a collection.'

The driver asks, 'How much is everyone giving, on average?'

'Most people are giving about a gallon.'

RHT





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## **Group Meetings**

Group meetings take place normally the second Monday in the month at the Church Hall on Icehouse Road in Hull city centre. Entry is from the car park.

For those of you who might like to attend the next meeting, the Group web site at [www.sentinel38.karoo.net/iam](http://www.sentinel38.karoo.net/iam) gives a MultiMap location.

In keeping with the Committee's desire to make the meetings as informal and interesting as possible the routine business is usually kept to a minimum and the rest of the evening given over to topical discussion and a guest speaker.

The meetings are open to all; Members, Associates, guests or just anyone who is interested in discovering how to improve their own driving skills and so contribute to road safety.

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## Quieter Times Ahead?

Just in case anyone was wondering, we did enjoy our holiday in Dorset.

We drove down and we were both surprised how we sailed along the motorways and other normally rather congested roads. At no point did we ever come to a halt because of road works, although we did pass a few. Superficially the roads seemed to be normally busy but with almost all hold-ups removed. It was a pleasing departure from the normal drive half way down the length of the country.

Neither of us gave it too much thought until, on the way home, we pulled into a roadside restaurant with a 'small cook', on the A63. It was mid evening and there were no volunteers for cooking a meal when we arrived home so we took the easy and now not too unhealthy option. We wandered in rather stiff legged to be greeted by an empty dining room save one rather conspicuous couple in the corner. We took several minutes deciding which of the thirty or so empty tables we should choose and after consulting the menu, a waitress, who turned out to be the manageress, came across to take our order.

The order was placed and one of us made a comment about how quiet the restaurant was. "It's been like this ever since the price of fuel went up." she said. "It's hardly worth coming to work."

Could it really be that the increase in the cost of fuel could have had such an impact on the road-side restaurant trade? Could it be that our unhindered drive was also something to do with the high and rising cost of fuel?

It seems to me that either motorists are at their limit and are no longer able to take the financial hammering that the average car owner has to endure or a relatively small reduction in the number of vehicles relieves congestion to an unbelievable degree. Either that or the Highways Agency, with its brief to maintain the traffic flow on the motorway network, are doing a brilliant job.

Perhaps we are about to witness the demise if the motor car. It may not be pollution controls which push the cost of a car out of the financial reach of the man-in-the-street. It may simply be that after having to pay the increased fuel bills to heat and power his home, there is simply nothing left to fund a car. There are, after all, alternatives to a private car. It's just if we can afford the time to use public transport for anything other than long distance journeys.

Alan



*That old softy, Graham Harper*

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## **Christmas Meeting 2008**

The December Group meeting will fall on Monday 8th.

After the rave reviews following the 2007 Christmas meeting entertainment - some may have called it a pantomime - this year, for your delectation, Mr Stephen Mills will be on stage for a real pantomime.

Curtains up at 7:30.

As an acknowledgement by our Group for the work done by Jonathan and his team all year round but particularly during the colder months, the committee would like to ask members and associates attending to bring a few cans of food each to help maintain Jonathan's cupboards. Almost anything which has a decent shelf life is suitable so canned or dried produce would be pre-

ferred. Last year the appeal was quite successful and I'm sure in some small way helped the Salvation Army to continue with its caring work.

As a sort of 'thank you' to all the regular monthly meeting supporters, following the entertainment in the main hall, there will be a buffet available in our normal room.

So, for those members and associates who like to plan ahead, keep Monday 8th December free for the Group Christmas meeting.

Your Committee

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## Army Presentation at Wenlock Barracks

As many of you will know, from my article in the Spring Edition, the Group has been involved with preparing some members of the Army's 250 Medical Squadron (Volunteers) stationed at Wenlock Barracks, for the IAM Test. We were approached last October and agreed to be involved with this initiative between the Army and the IAM. Financially the arrangements were different to the normal 'Skill for Life' and because of this the Associates received their Certificates, on passing the IAM Test, directly from London.

Peter Richardson and myself were involved with the initial Group of five army personnel – with four successful test passes and one person moving out of our area to continue with another Group.



"A bit to your left, Ivor. It's slipping!"

RHT

Following on we were asked to be involved with preparing another Group of seven, to which we happily agreed with John Pearce, Dave Allum and myself being the observers.

We then found with this second Group, that as people passed the test, their certificates were sent to our Secretary – the normal system with ‘civilian’ associates. In view of the number involved I discussed with Staff Sergeant Perry, who had organised the ‘training’, if some special presentation could be arranged, rather than just handing the certificates out individually. He was very enthusiastic and said he would discuss a possible presentation with his Commanding Officer.

The result was an invitation to myself, as Group President, and the observers to attend a buffet and presentation on 29th July. John Pearce was unable to attend due to holidays, but Dave Allum was able to come. At the last minute it was arranged that those who had received their certificates by post would bring them in to be officially presented. Unfortunately I did not realise this was happening in time to invite Peter Richardson to attend.

In his introduction the OIC at Wenlock, Major Dave Wenban, pointed out that over 100 army personnel had lost their lives in Afghanistan but, serious as this was, the equivalent of a full battalion of army personnel were killed or serious injured on the roads. He felt strongly that this figure must be reduced and the help our Group was giving, to his Squadron, to bring drivers up to Advanced standards was an excellent start.

The enthusiasm of those taking part in the training has been excellent. Out of the twelve people taking part, ten have passed the IAM Test, one is waiting to take the test and one has moved to another area. Of the ten who have passed eight were able to make the presentation and I had the privilege of giving out their certificates.

After the presentation Major Wenban again took to the floor and said some very complementary things about our Group and how delighted he was with his Squadron’s association with the IAM and our Group. His hope was that more money would be available to put further soldiers through the test. Because of the feedback of the initial Group, many more of the Squadron are keen to undertake the preparation for the IAM Test.

Then, much to my surprise, I was invited forward to be presented with a shield on which was a hand painted Squadron badge and a brass plate engraved “Ivor Nicholson with thanks & appreciation all Ranks B(250) Medical Squadron”. Although my name is engraved on the shield I feel it really is for our Group.

This superb evening finished with an excellent buffet and I was introduced to the Area Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Steele, who spoke of his appreciation of what our Group was doing for his squadron. (He is, of course, aware that we are all volunteers.)

Ivor Nicholson

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## President's Chat

Have you been looking for the 'Chief Observer's Chat' article, keen to see what words of wisdom have been written? Well you will not have found it because, following on from the last Newsletter when I said that the article was becoming general motoring comments rather than observer information, after a discussion with the Chairman and our Newsletter Editor the title has been changed to 'President's Chat'. As I have the privilege of holding both positions, if there is any specific observer news I will include it.

By now all members will have heard that the national annual subscription to the IAM is to increase by ten pounds next year. While understanding the reasoning behind this increase it still concerns me as to what the effect it will have on membership. With ever increasing costs of motoring how many members will feel one way of saving a small amount will be not to renew their IAM subscription? Also what effect will it have on future members? Already the cost of 'Skill for Life' is increasing to £99 and I am not sure if this covers the new increase in annual membership.

It has been pointed out that the new subscription still compares very favourably with that of other organizations.

The point is what does the IAM give you compared with these other organizations? I personally save more than the existing subscription with the discount I receive, as an IAM member, off my AA membership. Recently, for the first time, I contacted the IAM insurance broker for a quotation on my car insurance and after a small amount of negotiating received a figure £67 less than my existing renewal premium. Also the policy has additional cover to my present one, such as cover for charity work – even if expenses are received. I have now renewed with the IAM broker. I also am aware that in paying the annual subscription to the IAM I am supporting an important Charity working towards increasing road safety.

Writing this article for the Autumn Edition of our Group Newsletter, made me realise summer is nearly over and the weather conditions will soon start to affect our driving. What brought this to mind was an article on ESP (Electronic Stability Programme) This system, although named differently by some manufacturers, is now universally available. Simply it monitors the stability of a vehicle 25 times per second and identifies the risk of a skid at an early stage, even before the driver is aware of one, and uses the vehicle's brakes to steer the vehicle back on track. In 2007 figures indicated that the take up of this life saving system was under 50 per cent. Some people have called ESP a "Rich Man's" safety device, as most "up market" cars have it fitted as standard, whereas it is an optional extra on most "everyday" cars. Research has shown that while 89 per cent of decision makers rate safety as important, when selecting a vehicle, 69 per cent were unaware of the proven safety benefits of ESP. Although there are exceptions generally car salesmen do not push the importance of ESP when detailing optional extras available. It is considered



that annually 4000 lives would be saved, across Europe if it was fitted to all cars. One can debate that many modern features, such as active cruise control, are not needed by advanced drivers but I have yet to meet anyone who could say they will never get into a situation where ESP may not save their life. (Even if it is only once in a life time.)

Finally, although we have guided slightly more associates through the IAM Test this year than last year, our Group figures are still considerably down on say ten years ago. The impending increase in the cost of 'Skill for Life' and ever increasing costs of motoring mean we will have an even more difficult task, in the future, to maintain these figures. This makes it even more important for all members to spread the word about advanced driving which may bring new associates to the Group.

Ivor Nicholson

Group President

## Traffic wardens to Show Charm

Traffic wardens are launching a charm offensive in a bid to improve their image and help motorists.

The country's biggest employer of traffic wardens has ordered its employees to issue tickets only as a last resort.

It also wants them to help elderly people with their shopping, give directions and report missing manhole covers, reports the Daily Telegraph.

Westminster Council in London said that it was trying to reduce the number of tickets it handed out each year to make life easier for motorists and improve its parking services.

After attending seminars, the wardens will be followed by undercover council staff who will ask questions such as "How long can I park here?" to ensure they carry out their duties with a friendly smile.

Nearby Lambeth Council in South London has adopted a similar system. If they do not score well enough, wardens could be fined.

The undercover staff will also pretend to be errant motorists, in a scheme akin to that of "mystery shoppers", to ensure that motorists are being given a second chance.

Waliur Rahman, operations manager for NCP Services, said: "Parking officers have had so much negative publicity in the past, we're trying to send out a message to motorists. It's all about the quality of our customer service."



Submitted by RHT

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## Our August Speaker

For the August meeting Robert arranged for Mick Harris to talk to the Group.

Mick was the Senior Traffic Investigating Officer at the Selby train crash which occurred on 28th February 2001 in which a high speed passenger train was derailed after a collision with a Land Rover and trailer and went on to crash head-on with a freight train coming in the opposite direction. Ten men lost their lives in the incident and many more were injured.

Mick talked the Group through the process of investigating the scene of carnage, illustrated with photographs of the aftermath to allow us to gain a reasonable understanding of the extensive scene.



If the sequence of events of the Great Heck crash were to be used in a novel, it would be reasonable for the reader to think that the amazing storyline would simply never happen. The chances of such a sequence of events occurring in reality must be millions to one but that winter's morning it happened.

A Louth driver, Gary Hart, was driving his Land Rover, towing a trailer loaded with a Renault car, west bound along the M62. The enquiry determined that he had not had sufficient sleep causing him to fall asleep at the

wheel. This occurred just as he was approaching the east coast main line over which the motorway passed.

Evidence was obtained from the verge to show the vehicle had left the road at a very shallow angle: the tyre tracks left in the soft grass beyond the rumble strip left a clear tyre tread pattern showing that wheel was rolling rather than the smeared pattern of a wheel under braking. The Land Rover, trailer and its load crossed the verge, passed to the left of the crash barrier, positioned to help prevent this sort of crash, and continued down the embankment beyond eventually coming to rest over the south bound main east coast railway line.

Mr Hart used his mobile phone in an attempt to get a message to the railway authorities of the incident but before his message could be relayed the 4.45am Newcastle to London train collided with the crashed Land Rover. In the initial collision the front end of the Land Rover was almost totally destroyed and as it was struck, dug in to the soft track-side verge and acted as a lever pushing the train engine to the right. Meanwhile, the front coil spring from the Land Rover became trapped between the locomotive's leading wheel and the track and was sufficient to lift the locomotive causing it to derail to the right.

All this was determined by painstakingly matching damage on the track and spring together.

A high speed derailment like this is bad enough but the locomotive remained upright as it continued along the track, slowing all the while.

However, a Freightliner train travelling at about 55 mph was approaching the scene from the south, carrying 1800 tonnes of coal. This train would normally take one and a quarter miles to stop and so its driver was unable to shed much speed before the two locomotives collided head on.

With a combined weight of 2500 tonnes the energy involved was enormous and the destruction extensive. Most of the passenger train carriages were derailed and although some remained upright, other did not.

The collision investigation team used state-of-the-art laser scanning equipment to record the scene with high accuracy and amazing detail.

The investigation into the incident was not straightforward as the crash took place in an area of North Yorkshire normally policed by the West Yorkshire force but under an agreement with Humberside Police, due to motorway junctions, finally came under the jurisdiction of Humberside however many parties were involved in this complex case. The decision was made to involve all parties in the investigation, if possible, gaining approval from each before proceeding to the next stage in the investigation. Proceeding this way should avoid any awkward disagreements at the end of the case.

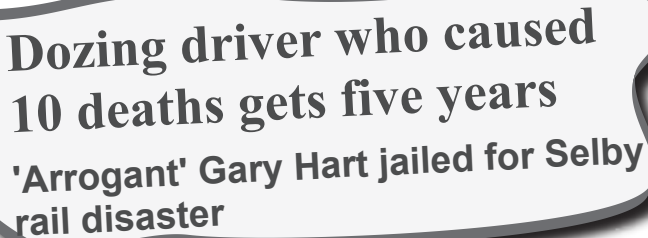
After a Nottingham team completed their task on body recovery and the scene had been recorded, on the fourth day all vehicles were recovered to Tadcaster where an aircraft like reconstruction of the vehicles took place, partly reassembling the 1300 pieces of the Land Rover which were recovered. There was only one part missing and that could not have contributed to

the driver's loss of vehicle control. The trains were moved to Doncaster railway sheds.

Many checks were carried out, like one done at Ford's test area, to establish the maximum angle of lean for a Land Rover to obtain a comparison with the vehicle running down the slope as it descended from the motorway. Checks were even carried out during two visits to Germany to test a non-standard suspension levelling unit fitted to the Land Rover which proved to be defective but non-contributory.

After much more testing, the police were able to confidently state that there were no significant defects found in the Land Rover or the carriageway and although the weather at the time of the crash was wet and sleety, it was manageable.

After calling in a sleep expert who testified that a driver simply isn't alert and awake one minute and asleep the next, the evidence was sufficient to accuse Gary Hart of falling asleep at the wheel. He had not slept earlier that night and evidence was obtained to show that earlier in his journey he had run off the road near to Humberside Airport indicating he had experienced a 'micro sleep' during which his ability to control his vehicle was severely reduced.



**Dozing driver who caused  
10 deaths gets five years  
'Arrogant' Gary Hart jailed for Selby  
rail disaster**

The court eventually concluded that the Land Rover driver had indeed fallen asleep at the wheel which was the primary cause of a multi million pound crash which took the lives of ten men and affected so very many more.

The lesson we must all learn is never to ignore the signs of fatigue. The sleep expert told the court that there are clear warning signs before the onset of sleep and when driving these must be acted upon. Rest and a nap is the only solution. Turning on the radio and opening the car windows may get you to a suitable area to stop but they are not a replacement for sleep.

Notwithstanding the tragic consequences of the crash, Mick said that in his 32 years in the police force, this was the pinnacle of investigative challenges and was a testament to the officers from all forces who were involved in the investigation.

The Group would like to thank you, Mick, for your very interesting presentation.

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## Automatic Gearboxes

More and more drivers use cars with automatic gearboxes. They are easy to use and reduce fatigue, especially in busy town traffic. However the salesman's claim: "Leave it in 'Drive' all day", although feasible and reassuring to the buyer, is poor advice. For advanced driving, some degree of selection of the manual mode ('geartronic' on some vehicles) is needed to obtain the best control in certain circumstances. There is sparse advice about the efficient use of automatic gearboxes, so these tips are aimed to help associates and others new to them.

### Practical tips

1. Modern automatics will not allow selection of 'Drive' from neutral or park without first applying pressure to the footbrake; this prevents 'creep', particularly with a cold engine running faster on the choke.

2. As an automatic has a little delay before the drive is taken up, use the accelerator gently from standstill to avoid a sudden surge in speed and excess fuel consumption.

3. If you are stationary in traffic for a short time, i.e. you anticipate less than a minute's stop, leave in 'Drive' and apply the footbrake, because no wear is taking place. If a vehicle approaches quickly from behind, your brake lights can be a useful warning. Remember however, that if struck from the rear, your foot may leave the brake pedal and may accidentally press on the accelerator— potential disaster!

4. If you guess you will be stationary for a minute or more, apply the handbrake and leave in Drive for safety.

5. In the East Riding, roads are mostly flat and you can safely use automatic mode most of the time. But in hilly areas, consider a change to a lower gear in manual mode in the following situations:

a. Down steep hills

b. A series of bends, especially if on steep hills, up or down - to balance the vehicle.

c. When overtaking on a single carriageway a lower ratio, 'Overdrive off' or 'Sports Mode' (if fitted) is advised; or, you can switch to a lower gear in manual mode.

d. Only use the pedal-to-floor 'kick-down' for emergencies such as the need to overtake very quickly to avoid another road user or obstruction. (This usually means poor anticipation on your part!) Kick down gives a rough ride and is wasteful of fuel.

e. Never stop or park in Neutral.

f. In case you can't always feel when automatic has changed gear, keep an eye on the revs meter: the revs will rise or fall when automatic changes gear, down or up. If the change does not match your judgement of the appropriate gear, you can quickly change to manual mode.

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## **Pensioner Reunited with His First Car**

A pensioner is celebrating after being reunited with his beloved Morris Minor car 50 years after he first drove it.

John Nagle, 67, managed to trace the 1934 vehicle's latest owner in Basildon, Essex, and couldn't resist buying it again.

He told the Sun: "It was my first car and I called it Emmeline for some reason.

"It was a smashing motor and you develop a special love for your first car, a bit like your first girlfriend."

Emmeline still has her old log, with John's handwritten notes in it, showing he bought her in 1958 for £30.

He sold the green convertible five years later, when he got an Austin A35 company car, for just £20.

She was a bit more expensive this time around - costing John £4,500.

*Submitted by RHT*

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## **Any Colour You like, as Long as It'S Black!**

Second only to the purchase of a house a motor car is perhaps the most important, and, possibly, the most expensive single item we might buy. With currently there being an estimated 30 million private vehicles on the road in the UK, it makes the choice an important one – but what constitutes the criteria for such a purchase? I guess the first thing anyone intending to buy a car would be interested in would be the make of the vehicle – and the cost of course. Possibly the next thing to consider is the colour. There are many reasons why people choose a certain colour for their vehicle and getting it right can make a huge difference.

Today the purchaser of a motor car has an almost endless selection of colours to choose from – and I am referring only to the body colour and not to the interior.

The history of car colours has been influenced by several things since it first made its mark at the turn of the century. The very early cars, originating in Germany and France and then England, were works of art in their own right, including the body paintwork. Not only were they painted in bright colours, a process that could entail many, many coats of sealer, primer, undercoat, body colour, finishing colour and varnish, but were often decorated with narrow lines of contrasting colour, in the tradition of their predecessors, the carriage. No wonder it could take up to six months for delivery! It was not until Henry Ford entered the scene, in 1908 with the appearance of the first Model T Ford, that things began to change. Designed purely for economy and representation of value for money, over 15 million of them were produced in the nineteen years of its life and Henry Ford was credited as being



the originator of massed production as applied to the car industry. As a consequence of this type of production, Henry Ford used only black paint as no time was lost with just one colour being used, and it was also claimed that it dried quicker than other colours. It was at this time that he issued his famous quote that customers could have “any colour so long as it was black”!

Towards the end of the 1920's women had climbed the social ladder and were having more of a say in what went on. Acknowledging their influence they now had, manufacturers countered by offering a variety of models aimed directly at the woman driver, complete with a previously unheard of range of colours. However, years of depression followed into the 1930's and to some degree it was back to the characterless, and increasing, mass produced car.

For the duration of the second world war, most car manufacturing plants were given over to the war effort and as a result, little or no design work was done. It took a little time, upon the cessation of hostilities, for cars to be produced once more and those that were were of pre-war design. However, as the new decade approached, attentions were once again turned to new design – and a choice of colours – somewhat influenced by the resurgence of motor racing where cars sported a whole range of colours designating their origin, such as British racing green, Ferrari red, Maserati blue, French Gordini yellow, and, upon the re-acceptance of German entries, the silver of Mercedes.

We now reach the modern era of the motor car of the last two or three decades when mass production and new techniques became highly developed, culminating in robotics and computer control. A much wider range of colours became available and the early part of this period saw the almost demise of the black car and the emergence of metallic colours. Today there is virtually an unlimited choice of colour with black re-emerging again as a top colour choice.

What influences people to want a particular colour when buying either second-hand or new? One dealer states there are two criteria to meet that seem to be consistent: the first is that the chosen colour should be different to their last vehicle, whilst secondly, the wife always has an important say in it! Certain cars look good in certain colours. White may be popular for vans but not for sports cars which are often in bright colours; executive cars are usually in more conservative colours; and it has been said that silver cars can be difficult to see in bright sunshine.

Interesting theories have been put forward regarding the correlations of occupations and car colours: undertakers are often associated with the colour black but they are twice as likely as the average motorist to drive a yellow car; debt collectors seem to steer clear of red cars in order to remain as inconspicuous as possible; policemen are 7% more likely than average to drive a blue car; chefs are 127% more likely than average to drive a white car; barristers are 457% more likely than average to drive a brown car; surgeons are 62% more likely than average to drive a silver car; stockbrokers are 84%

more likely than average to drive a black car; and journalists are 60% more likely than average to drive a red car. Interesting thoughts, eh?

Car colours also play an important part in road safety and should be a factor to people when choosing their next vehicle. Silver has been proved more than once to be the best colour for avoiding a crash resulting in serious injury whilst green, brown and black have been said to increase the risk, although the T.R.R.L., (Transport and Road Research Laboratory), after examining 2649 road traffic accidents found that brown vehicles were involved in fewer crashes. Yellow cars also score highly for safety. Black vehicles are said to be five times more likely to crash whilst although drivers of red cars may be more likely to crash, it is not necessarily because of the colour of their car makes them less visible, but because red cars are more sporty and tend to appeal to drivers of a risk taking nature.

Actual surveys to determine the popularity of car colours are not readily available although some figures are available. To partly remedy this and to compare with some T.R.R.L. figures, the author has conducted his own research (undertaken by F.A.C.E. – Freeman’s Automobile Colour Enumerator). – the first being done in 1983 whilst the author was Newsletter Editor of the Hull & East Riding Advanced Motorists Group! Results of surveys undertaken follow:

**1972** [undertaken by T.R.R.L. – total of 16,743 cars surveyed]

|    |             |       |
|----|-------------|-------|
| 1. | Blue        | 27.9% |
| 2. | White       | 18.4% |
| 3. | Green       | 15.0% |
| 4. | Red         | 12.4% |
| 5. | Brown       | 10.0% |
| 6. | Grey/Silver | 8.4%  |
| 7. | Yellow      | 4.2%  |
| 8. | Black       | 2.4%  |
| 9. | Orange      | 1.4%  |

**1983** [undertaken by F.A.C.E. – total of 2,000 cars surveyed]

|    |             |       |
|----|-------------|-------|
| 1. | Blue        | 22.3% |
| 2. | Red         | 18.0% |
| 3. | White       | 13.0% |
| 4. | Green       | 9.7%  |
| 5. | Beige       | 9.2%  |
| 6. | Grey/Silver | 6.9%  |
| 7. | Brown       | 6.8%  |
| 8. | Yellow      | 6.2%  |
| 9. | Black       | 3.4%  |

|            |      |
|------------|------|
| 10. Maroon | 2.6% |
| 11. Orange | 2.0% |
| 12. Purple | 0.2% |

2002[undertaken by PPG Industries – unknown number of cars surveyed]

|                |       |
|----------------|-------|
| 1. Silver/Grey | 40.0% |
| 2. Blue        | 19.0% |
| 3. Black       | 13.0% |
| 4. Green       | 9.0%  |
| 4. Red         | 9.0%  |
| 6. White       | 6.0%  |

2008 [undertaken by F.A.C.E. – total of 850 cars surveyed]

|           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| 1. Silver | 26.5% |
| 2. Black  | 21.5% |
| 3. Blue   | 16.1% |
| 4. Grey   | 12.8% |
| 5. Red    | 8.9%  |
| 6. Green  | 6.1%  |
| 7. White  | 3.4%  |
| 8. Maroon | 2.6%  |

An article on car colours could not be complete without mentioning the Volkswagen Harlequin cars. These multi-coloured cars, in both the Golf and Polo ranges, became an instant hit in the early 1990's and it is believed that only around 264 VW Golf's were produced and probably 3,806 Polo's were. Each car had colours ranging from green, red, blue, yellow and orange, on the roof, doors, bonnet, boot and bumpers so that each car was *very* multi-coloured! Looking like a 90's student disco, the official VW magazine said, at the time of the car's unveiling, "if you can't decide on a colour try a Harlequin Golf". When ordering a Harlequin the customers' colour requests could not be taken into account as the production process did not allow for this. So, if someone ordered a Harlequin, they did not know which colour version they would finally receive. Has any reader ever owned one of these?

Ron Freeman

#### Footnote

Ron Freeman was Newsletter Editor of the Hull & East Riding Advanced Motorists Group during the early 1980's, passing his Advanced Test in 1982. Written by the same author, part of this article first appeared in a Group Newsletter in 1984 but has been updated and added to in recognition of a 20-odd year gap when first written.



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