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Forward

**Newsletter of
Somerset & Wiltshire Advanced
Motorists**

www.swam-iam.org.uk

Registered Charity No 1050592

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Somerset & Wiltshire Advanced Motorists

(Registered Charity No. 1050592)

AUGUST—OCTOBER 2020

Forward

Issue 2

Contents

August Meeting	3	A Steer in the right direction	11
Editorial	4	Quiz	15
Next publication date	4	Skill at the Wheel—2	16
A Message from the Chairman	5	Spoken Thoughts Highlights	20
IAM Advice on Observing	5	Quiz answers	23
Observing and observed runs	6	September and October Events	24
Membership of SWAM	7	Fun Corner	24
Report on June Meeting	8	Editorial disclaimer	24

AUGUST MEETING

Although we are not yet planning to hold meetings in the hall at Beckington Memorial Hall, we are organising an outdoor event there in August.

SWAM will be holding a Slow Manoeuvring exercise at 18.00 on Thursday, 20 August, at:

Beckington Memorial Hall
36 Bath Rd, Beckington,
Frome BA11 6SH

The aim is to improve three slow manoeuvring procedures: reversing around a corner, parallel parking and the multi point turn.

There will be three National observers helping. However, we will not be socialising or joining you in your car and you will not need to get out of your car.

Everyone is welcome but places are limited, so please email Peter Huntington, membership@swam-iam.org.uk, if you are interested.

EDITORIAL

Welcome to our second edition of *Forward*. Although we are still under some restrictions, we are pleased to announce that Observers are now allowed to take Associates out for observed runs. See p.5 for information from IAM RoadSmart about this welcome news. Some Observers and some Associates may not want to be sharing a car at this time and this is fully respected and there is no pressure on anybody to do anything with which they are uncomfortable.

We have one piece of news which is that David Sibley has decided to resign as Associates Coordinator owing to increasing personal commitments. He has held the post for more than 12 years with BADAM and SWAM and has steered hundreds of Associates through the process of their training and taking the test. He was also Chairman of BADAM for the two years leading up to the merger with MAM to form SWAM and the work he did in that time helped the process of the merger go smoothly. We are very grateful to him for all the work he has done in the cause of Advanced Motoring and wish him well.

David Major, Chief Observer, will be taking over from David Sibley as Associates Coordinator. At the Melksham group he held both posts and found that it worked very well for him so he is happy to do the same for SWAM.

We held a successful Zoom meeting in June (report on p.8), as our Chairman, John Morley, says in his article on page 5. There was another one in July and we expect to continue with Zoom meetings in the autumn while we consider the practicalities of meeting at Beckington Memorial Hall (BMH). In August there will be a special meeting at BMH to practise manoeuvring, details of which are given on page 3.

Now that observing is permitted again, we are offering our Free Taster Sessions to those who would like to see what is involved in Advanced Driving. Many of us have not driven much over the last few months and may feel a bit rusty so, if you know anybody who would like a free drive with one of our National Observers, please contact our Deputy Chair, Lindsay Flower. Her details are on page 2.

A correction needs to be made to something that appeared in the first issue of *Forward*. The last line of page 8, about mirrors in cars, should read 'all **new** cars must have three...'. The rule does not apply to older cars. Apologies if anybody had any concerns about this.

Clare Hogg
John Morley
Sue Phillips

The next edition of *Forward* will be published in November 2020. Please submit motoring-related articles and / or digital photographs to the Editors (*who reserve the right to edit them*) by Friday 9 October at the latest. Names of authors and their home addresses should be disclosed to the Editors who will withhold them from publication on request.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Whilst it is unfortunate that the coronavirus has had a major impact on the group's main business, that of improving the standard of driving, it has not totally hampered the development of our group.

Thanks to the use of Zoom, the Committee has managed to hold its monthly meetings, and we have had our first SWAM social evening. The numbers tuning in to the social evening on 18 June exceeded 30, but a few hiccups may have prevented others from participating. These should be sorted before the next social evening.

When we eventually get back to normal business I hope that we shall have a good attendance at Beckington Memorial Hall, where we have excellent facilities. In the meantime the Committee is considering the use of Zoom to broadcast the social evenings to those who cannot attend, primarily because they live too far away. If this does come to fruition, I hope that it will not deter members from physically attending, as this will result in the loss of human contact between members at what is intended to be a social occasion.

The motoring groups have now been given the go ahead to commence observed sessions on the 20 July, with Advanced Driver testing starting on 3 August. However, it will be up to individuals to decide if they wish to participate. In the meantime our Observers have been contacting their existing Associates to seek an opinion on whether or not they wish to recommence observed runs. The group has also been looking at alternative methods of providing guidance to Associates.

This is the second edition of *Forward*, and I hope that you will enjoy reading it, and find the contents useful. Clare, the Editor, is always looking for contributions, so if you have any ideas please feel free to contact her.

In the meantime, stay safe!

John Morley

Chairman, SWAM

IAM ADVICE ON RESTARTING OBSERVED RUNS

Timetable

6 July – Peer observed sessions and assessments to ensure observing skills are up to date. (These sessions must be conducted in accordance with the guidelines below unless all participants are

part of the same household or 'social bubble'.)

20 July – Observed session with Associates (conducted in accordance with guidelines).

3 August – IAM RoadSmart testing.

Guidance

There are clear guidelines for Observers to follow when taking out Associates, and for Associates to follow when going out with an Observer. The following is the advice on use of PPE and there is lots more guidance on how the runs should be conducted.

Face coverings must be worn by both parties; it is mandatory on public transport and will minimise cross-contamination where social distancing is not possible in a vehicle (there may be circumstances where for medical reasons this is not advised; in these circumstances consider whether the session should go ahead). [SWAM has purchased visors for the use of Observers so they will have extra protection.]

We recommend disposable gloves

as you will be observing in a vehicle which is not your own. If you are not wearing gloves, use appropriate hand sanitiser before getting into and after getting out of the vehicle. If you have used gloves dispose of them correctly.

Wear appropriate clothing for the session; it is recommended that arms and legs are covered.

Best advice is to keep windows open to circulate fresh air within the vehicle and avoid using re-circulating features on the ventilation system. This needs to be balanced with the effects of wind noise and weather conditions.

[The above advice would also be applicable if you were in the position of giving a lift to somebody in your own car which is why we are publishing this part of the guidance in detail.]

OBSERVING AND OBSERVED RUNS

As already mentioned, observed runs have now begun again. All Observers will go out with a National Observer before starting to take their Associates out again, to ensure that our normal high standards are being maintained after months of not observing.

When things get more back to normal and it is possible to arrange such a meeting, David Major, Chief Observer, will arrange a session for all the Observers in SWAM from the former Bath and Melksham

groups so that all the Observers can get to know each other. David will then arrange a training plan and meetings throughout the year. In the past, Melksham group held joint training sessions with Swindon group, and he would like this to continue as the training events have been a great success for both the groups and IAM RoadSmart.

If you are interested in becoming an Observer, please contact David Major at chiefobserver@swam-iam.org.uk

MEMBERSHIP OF SWAM

Membership of BADAM and MAM automatically transferred to SWAM at the time of the merger. SWAM's fees for 2021 are due in January 2021, even if you paid at a different time of year to the former groups.

Enclosed with this copy of *Forward* is a form in connection with payment of fees to SWAM for 2021. The first part of the form asks how you propose to pay your annual membership fee and it needs to be completed by all members. There are four options: to pay by Standing Order, by BACS, by cheque or in cash. **Please will you return this form as soon as possible to the Treasurer**, Mrs Clare Hogg, 4 Great Ostry, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, BA4 5TT. If you need a printed copy of the form, please email Clare at accounts@swam-iam.org.uk

Fees

The fee for an individual member is £12, which was the same for both BADAM and MAM. However, in BADAM the fee for two members at the same address was £15, and this will be continued for SWAM. This means that two ex-MAM members at the same address will be making a saving of £9 on their fees for the year.

Gift Aid

Because we are a registered charity, we are able to augment donations using Gift Aid. This means that for every pound you pay, provided you are a taxpayer and sign up to Gift Aid, Somerset & Wiltshire Advanced Motorists will **receive an extra 25p**

from HM Revenue & Customs.

Subscriptions qualify as donations, which means that your £12 can be turned into £15, so long as it is made through Gift Aid, thereby generating extra funds for the Group and it won't cost you anything. We are therefore asking all members to sign up to Gift Aid, if they are able to. Any forms you previously signed for either Bath & District Advanced Motorists or Melksham Advanced Motorists will not be valid after this year so it is very important for us that you sign new forms.

Standing Orders

If you normally pay by Standing Order you will need to change your Standing Order to reflect the new name. The form enclosed with this newsletter has a section for you to change your Standing Order. Please complete the form and send it to your bank, or, if you do online banking, you can do it online.

The bank account details are as follows:

Name: Somerset & Wiltshire Advanced Motorists (alternatives allowed are: Som & Wilts Adv Motorists or SWAM)

Sort code; 30-99-51

Account number: 01059646

Start date: 2 January 2021

It will be necessary to make this change before the end of 2020 so that the new Standing Order mandate is in place for the beginning of 2021, and there is no reason why it cannot be done now.

REPORT ON JUNE MEETING

The first meeting of Somerset and Wiltshire Advanced Motorists was held via Zoom rather than at Beckington Memorial Hall because of Covid-19.

Our Chairman, John Morley, opened the meeting and introduced the new Group. Unfortunately, since SWAM's formation the country has been in lockdown although all the Committee members have been hard at work.

SWAM has 225 Members, including 24 Associates, although the Associates are on hold. They have, however, been made aware that their membership will be extended by six months because of the current restrictions, which should help them to make up for lost time once observed runs can begin again.

The Committee came up with the idea of on-line training, hence tonight's meeting. Once we are able to meet in person, meetings will be held at Beckington Memorial Hall where we will have excellent facilities, including the choice of two rooms, and dedicated parking. The facility will provide a fairly central location for most members.

SWAM has taken some members from Salisbury Group which has unfortunately folded.

In the past, the Melksham Group shared Observer training with Swindon and it is hoped that this co-operation will continue.

For this first meeting, SWAM's Chief Observer, David Major was the speaker, talking about Advanced Driving using a PowerPoint

presentation. John asked everyone to get involved with questions, but to be patient in the event of teething problems.

David first introduced himself: an IAM member for 24 years, Chief Observer, National Observer, with a Masters qualification and a Masters Mentor. He is also a Local Observer Assessor, an IAM Examiner and has the RoSPA gold qualification.

He explained the formation of SWAM and the advantages of being a bigger group, such as the 26 highly qualified Observers, a larger club house with parking and a more central location for some members.

He explained what Associates and members could expect from SWAM – supportive and honest comments, help to improve standards of driving, and advice to attain the IAM test standard – and reminded us that Observers do not teach but act as advisors and counsellors.

He said what SWAM expects of its Associates – practice between sessions, telling Observers of any concerns and studying the newest editions of the Advanced Driving Manual and the Highway Code.

David talked about a typical day on our roads (although not at the moment), with perhaps unlicensed drivers, new drivers, sales reps late for an appointment, distracted parents, unfit drivers, fiddling drivers eating food or on mobile phones.

The Principles of Advanced Driving are to concentrate and avoid distractions, to read the road and anticipate hazards. We have three senses to

use to help us do this – our sight is the most important, but we also use our hearing, for example to hear children, and our sense of smell, for example to smell grass being cut.

Showing the next three slides, David asked:

What can be seen?



What can't be seen?



and What might reasonably be expected to happen?



There was a good response from members and David filled in what they had missed.

Next, David explained, with the help of some illuminating slides, what we can see if our eyes are on low beam and on main beam and advised that we should drive with our eyes moving between the two in order to see all the hazards around us.

He explained the key principles to remember when driving and asked if we were Considerate, Thinking and Skilful Drivers.

David gave us some key principles to remember:

1. Concentrate and avoid distractions.
2. Read the road and anticipate hazards.
3. Anticipate how they may affect you.
4. Drive in a planned and systematic way.
5. Use mirrors and all-round observation.
6. Signal only when appropriate.
7. Drive with restraint but not indecision.
8. Steer the vehicle safely and effectively.
9. Brake smoothly and progressively.
10. Change gear at the right time and speed.
11. Use acceleration sense.
12. Use controls with finesse and sensitivity.

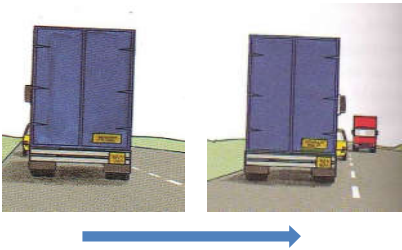
The Advanced System of Car Control helps us with this.

David went on to explain IPSGA and how to put it into action.

A series of slides expanded on some of the points:

Information is taken in and given out to others.

Position: moving out slightly or falling back may enable you to get more information.



Speed: you must be able to stop in the distance you can see to be clear on your side of the road. Obey the two second rule, and ensure you can see tyres and tarmac when you stop behind another vehicle.

The next series of slides explained and illustrated the limit point of vision. David emphasised a number of points – do not cross the central white line in order to check round the bend; as the limit point opens out, approach the corner at the right speed, in the right gear; do not brake on the bend.

David next addressed the Pre-Driving Checks. The POWDER check for the outside of the car: Petrol, Oil, Water, Defects, Electrics, Rubber.

Then, inside the car – doors, seat and seat belts; head restraints;

mirror; handbrake; gear in neutral; switch on ignition – check lights; dip clutch and start engine; check instruments; try a static/moving brake test.

David said that during the test, Associates will be required to perform an unspecified manoeuvre, such as reversing around a corner, parallel parking, or turning the car round in the road (a multiple point turn).

A commentary is not essential during the test, but it aids concentration, observation and planning. David explained you should say what you see (such as road conditions; road markings; other vehicles; pedestrians/cyclists; animals; traffic signs/signals; weather conditions; road entrances/exits), always asking yourself the question – how will it affect my driving?

And What Next? – David said that we must encourage people to go on to become Observers, Local and National; to become a Local Observer Assessor; to become a Master and a Masters Mentor.

This point was emphasised by Helen Schofield, President of SWAM. She challenged members to redo their test and become a Fellow, to prove that their driving is still up to standard. This can also help to reduce insurance premiums.

The former Melksham group held an annual drive check, inviting Members to go out with an Observer who could give pointers about keeping standards up. The group had also interacted with the Swindon Group, having 3-in-a-car sessions, and it

was hoped this would continue.

Clare Hogg, SWAM's Treasurer, was asked about the financial position of the Group. She said the Group is in a good position at present – especially as, at the moment, no money is being spent.

Helen Schofield, who had retained her position as President of the new Group, thanked all those who had brought the two groups together into a strong and powerful Group.

Clare Hogg welcomed Val Bearne and Callum MacLeod to the meeting – both former members of BADAM who live too far away to attend meetings at Beckington, but able to join by Zoom.

Lindsay Flower, SWAM's Deputy Chair, asked what people should do before starting their cars up after so many weeks of lockdown. Some advice was:

Do not just switch on the engine, walk around the car, and then switch off. Let the engine run for a while to recharge the battery (staying in the car). If you can take it around the block that would be good for the tyres and allow you to check the brakes. Even better would be to run the car up to normal running temperature – about 15 minutes.

John thanked David for his informative talk and the meeting was closed.

A STEER IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

by John Morley, IAM National Observer

In my last article I covered issues that Associates first have with complying with speed limits. I would now like to discuss another common issue, that of steering.

When driving along a road have you noticed how other drivers are handling their steering wheel? No doubt you will have seen many examples of one hand on the top of the wheel, sometimes with the other hanging out of the window, or even on the roof. Any sudden requirement to change direction or react to a pothole in the road (road scarring) etc, could result in an accident. Advanced driving requires drivers to handle the steering wheel with both hands in a controlled manner, in order to reduce the risk of an accident.

The technique to be adopted is to

handle the steering wheel with a pull-push motion. It has been suggested that this method originated from the days when vehicles had very large, almost horizontal steering wheels, that drivers had to tug on to turn due to the antiquated steering mechanisms, which were not power assisted, and extremely heavy. Hence, the pull-push method was the result of a physical requirement.



This method has been maintained over the years and, with modern technology, it is very effective, enabling drivers to manoeuvre a vehicle in a safe and controlled manner. It may not be the method that Jeremy Clarkson or racing drivers adopt, but on our busy highways, where traffic is flowing in both directions, and there are many hazards, it is a safe and effective method. That is why it is currently supported by the police, IAM RoadSmart, and other road safety organisations.

Position:

Before I get into the detail of actual steering techniques, I must mention that the first requirement to enable a driver to steer correctly, is that of position. The driver's seat and steering wheel should be in a comfortable position, with the driver's elbows slightly bent when the hands are on the steering wheel, and knees slightly bent when depressing the pedals. If the position of your steering wheel is adjustable, adjust it to the most comfortable position, and to the position where you can also see the vehicle's instrument panel.

Keep your hands on the wheel!

As an Observer, one of the first things that has to be proposed with new Associates is to encourage them to keep both hands on the wheel at all times, except for when they need to operate the vehicle's controls which, with the exception of the hand brake, should only be done whilst driving straight ahead. So the first thing that I ask Associates to do when they get in their vehicle, is to place both hands on the steering

wheel. This ensures that they have control if they get shunted, or the vehicle moves inadvertently.

Do not change gear, or operate other controls, whilst turning the steering wheel. This means that you are trying to carry out more than one operation at a time, and you have less control of the vehicle.

Position of hands on the wheel:

When setting off on a drive, there are two main starting positions for handling the steering wheel. These are with the hands at ten to two, or a quarter to three (nine to three). However, there is some debate over the use of the ten to two position. This arises from the issue of airbags, where there may be a risk that hands and arms etc may be injured if the bag is set off, because they will obstruct the bag when it suddenly inflates from the centre of the steering wheel. Therefore, the quarter to three position is recommended. However, with today's smaller steering wheels, and if holding the thumbs on top of the steering wheel rim, the risk is possibly lower. So my recommendation is to use the quarter to three method, or slightly higher if more comfortable.

The palm of your hands should be in contact with the rim, with the thumbs on top of the rim to avoid injury if hitting a kerb for instance. Do not sound your horn if, unfortunately, you are about to collide with another vehicle, as your hand will obstruct the airbag if it is set off, and you may be injured.

Turning the wheel:

Reference: *How to be a better driver*

There are two methods for turning the steering wheel:

For minor turns, the hands may be fixed on the wheel, but do not pass the top, or bottom dead centre.

For medium and large turns, use the pull-push method.

1. Using a right hand turn as an example: Starting at the straight ahead position, slide the right hand towards the one o'clock position, while gripping the wheel with your left hand. Grip with your right hand and pull downwards, letting the wheel slide through your left hand.



2. At the same time as your right hand moves towards the five o'clock position, slide your left hand down to the seven o'clock position, and then change your grip to this hand.



3. Push the wheel upwards with your left hand, keeping the wheel moving continuously. At the same time, move your right hand back towards the top of the wheel, and repeat if you need to apply more lock.



4. The hands should end up at the starting position (e.g. a quarter to three). During the process, do not pass the top, or bottom, dead centre, and do not let the wheel slide through both hands at the same time.

'Lift and Grab':

One of the main issues that I find with Associates is that they 'Lift and Grab'. In other words, they temporarily remove one hand from the wheel, then place it further up, or down. This potentially reduces their control of the wheel, and could, in extreme cases, be a risk, e.g. if the car's wheels hit a patch of road scarring, or deep water. Do not lift and grab, always slide the wheel through the hand.

Reversing:

When reversing, the approach is different because of the position that the driver has to adopt in order to see, and maintain control of the

vehicle, when going backwards. Adopt a comfortable position that will maximise control of your vehicle. You may use the pull-push method if this is suitable, otherwise you may turn your body to get a better view, in which case you may use one hand to steer, and may support yourself by placing the other hand on the back of the passenger's seat. In this case, stop, if you need to reposition your hand. Make additional use of driving aids (e.g. cameras, reversing sensors), and mirrors, and take your time. Stop if necessary, and carry out a 360 degree check of activities around the car that may present a hazard.

Being Polite:

Associates are encouraged to be polite at all times, so when thanking another person with your hand, use your left hand, but keep it in touch with the steering wheel. The left hand is more easily seen, and the wheel is still being controlled by two hands.

Never take your hand off the wheel (or flash your lights) to wave someone on. You could be waving them on to an unknown hazardous situation, and you are leaving only one hand in control of the car. As an alternative, make eye contact with the other driver, they will then know that you are aware of them, and can make their own decision regarding proceeding.

'Dry Turning':

Never turn the steering wheel whilst stationary. This is known as 'Dry Turning', and places extra stresses on the steering mechanisms, bearing in mind that with modern power assisted steering this may not be noticeable to the driver. It can also cause damage to the tyres.

Stopping:

And finally, at the end of each journey, when the vehicle comes to a standstill on a level road, ensure that the steering wheel is positioned in the straight ahead position with the handbrake applied. This ensures that there is no confusion when next moving off.

There are various configurations for parking on a hill, which may be covered in a future article.

Remember, your steering technique should demonstrate that you have full control of your vehicle at all times.

As with the previous article on Speeding, this article has been compiled to aid Associates preparing for the advanced driving test, and existing advanced drivers, who may appreciate a reminder of driving techniques. It is my interpretation of the main requirements, along with some referencing, and I hope it will be of assistance where applicable.

QUIZ set by John Morley

1	What are the 3 categories of hazard?	Rain, ice and snow; Physical, people and weather; Braking, accelerating and cornering; or Sunshine, darkness and fog?
2	What model of Morris car was named after a university city?	Cambridge; Plymouth; Bristol; or Oxford?
3	What is the significance of arrows on the carriageway of a mini roundabout?	To indicate direction; You may cross the centre; or It is a legal requirement to follow them?
4	Why do some chevron road signs have a yellow surround?	To make them look colourful; To indicate an abnormally severe bend; To make them conspicuous; or To indicate that it is a mandatory requirement to slow down?
5	To 2 decimal places, how many pounds per square inch are there in 1 Bar?	14.00; 14.25; 14.50; or 14.75?
6	What electrical device aids the start of a car's diesel engine?	Spark plug; or Glow plug?
7	How far back should you stop behind a stationary vehicle in a queue?	Far enough to see the vehicle's rear bumper; Far enough to see the vehicle's tyres on the tarmac; or Far enough to see the vehicle's rear lights?
8	What is the national speed limit on a dual carriageway?	60 mph; 70 mph; or 80 mph?

Answers on page 23

SKILL AT THE WHEEL—2 by Andy Poulton

[Editor's note: The first article in Andy's Skill at the Wheel series can be found in Advance 178, BADAM's newsletter, available on our website.]

Don't talk yourself into trouble!

TALK YOURSELF OUT OF IT!!

The hazard or situation ahead, that is.

"SPOKEN THOUGHTS" !

Can be defined as the bringing foremost into your mind and then putting into words and phrases what was in the back of your mind. [Other definitions are available!]

SO, OBSERVE, PLAN AHEAD, ANTICIPATE, & REACT.

Subconsciously you already think about your driving [*we hope*] which makes you more aware of the situation ahead, systematically deal with it, and improve the level of concentration.

In earlier ROADCRAFTs it was defined as:-

The complete application of mind and body to an endeavour to the complete exclusion of everything not relevant to that endeavour.

There are various levels one could apply to driving:-

Unconscious incompetence.

Conscious incompetence.

Conscious competence.

Finally:-

Unconscious competence.

[Don't ask! Yes, the jury is still out on that one. However, I have seen many drivers position, inch perfectly, through a long series of corners and bends hardly turning the wheel whilst concentrating on the drive and hazards ahead seemingly giving it no thought at all, 'unconscious of their skill/actions'.]

The ability to concentrate exists in everyone but few can concentrate sufficiently to drive a vehicle with complete mastery for very long. The driver must therefore adjust the speed of his vehicle to the degree of concentration they are able to apply at the time. Without self-discipline attention is inclined to wander from essential points of observation. A conscious effort must be made to prevent this.

TALK ABOUT IT THEN.

It is helpful to an examiner, observer or trainer to hear your spoken thoughts. It is through this that they can assess:-

WHERE your observations are.

How ADVANCED they are.

- a) How far ahead
 - b) How much better and relevant they are over and above an average driver.
- How SOUND are your driving plans?*

DRIVING PLANS

are based on:-

WHAT YOU CAN SEE

WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE

WHAT YOU MIGHT REASONABLY EXPECT TO DEVELOP

WHICH HAZARD REPRESENTS THE GREATEST THREAT

WHAT TO DO IF THINGS TURN OUT DIFFERENTLY FROM EXPECTED

[Contingency plan, my weak area as some drivers are acting so bizarrely.]

A poor example would be if a driver was talking about a situation approaching a junction when they should be starting or have started the SYSTEM and be talking their way through that. Worse still would be for a driver to be talking about something irrelevant and continuing to do so at the approach to more serious hazards.

[Should be Prioritising, all common faults]

SOUND?

A common example of UNSOUND driving plans is when you tell yourself what the car in front or behind (or you) are not going to do.

"The car in front is not going to turn off/out/in/stop".

[IT WILL]

"I am not going to overtake along here" (sometimes adding I do not know the road).

[WE SHOULD HAVE DONE OR WE ARE FOLLOWING A TRACTOR ON A DUAL CARRIAGEWAY]

The car behind will not overtake me along here now as it is too dangerous/narrow/speed limited.

[IT WILL]

So at least try not to make NEGATIVE statements. Be positive about the negative actions being predicted.

Better still adopt a PESSMISTIC attitude to driving plans. [Easy for me as I am a glass nearly empty person. Or, it is all coming over BLACK]

[The trouble with that is I am always being proved right (or wrong) and predict all that WILL go wrong.]

Driving plans and decisions can rarely be based solely on what can be seen because there are many stretches of road where the layout and traffic

conditions do not permit unobstructed views. The greatest difficulties arise from areas into which the driver cannot see such as around corners, bends, behind trees, buildings, blind brows or beyond. In these circumstances we are driving to be able to stop safely, comfortably, and on our own side of the road in the distance we can see to be clear.

Allowances should always be made for the mistakes of others. It is unsafe to assume another driver will react correctly in any given situation. They may have only just passed the driving test that hour (my favourite); or be driving a strange, unusual or defective vehicle.

They may be naturally aggressive; thoughtless; driving way beyond their (or their vehicle's) capabilities; or late for an urgent appointment.

Driving to the system then will prevent a driver from being involved in a road traffic collision for which they may be directly responsible.

By concentration, early recognition of potential hazards, and a defensive attitude of mind, they will avoid a collision resulting from the mistakes of others.

Driving plans, therefore must be based on what is actually observed, the assumption that there may be danger in every obscured section of road and hazard, and that others may do something foolish at any moment. [Again, my weak area only because it does not include VERY, VERY FOOLISH, UTTERLY BIZARRE or as usual STUPID, behaviour.]

This all equals to using O.A.R. in your Spoken Thoughts:-

Observations

Actions

Reasons

Better explained by

What you can see.

What you are going to do about it.

Why

So, truthfully, there are three levels of spoken thoughts, as above, numbered 1 - 3.

- 1) Basic
- 2) Advanced
- 3) Observer

Basically, when not actually dealing with hazards or in the middle of applying the system you should be playing PREDICTIONS, or using OBSERVATION LINKS.

That is 'what are ALL the things that are going to go wrong next'?

[NO, not with the car, relationships, work, etc, BUT in the ever-changing road

scene ahead, or where it is going, or what it is going to do next.]

An accurate forecast can be made by observing quite small details. It is frequently possible to notice something and to link what is seen to the possibility of something else happening.

Two obvious examples are:-

Following a bus and passengers are seen moving or getting up means the possibility of stopping at the next stop.

Cyclist looks over their shoulder; they are going to turn.

Examples are In the following article, Spoken Thoughts Highlights, on page 20. [Not an exhaustive list but all feature in my Spoken Thoughts Booklet.]

What is your own favourite?

Mine is:-

Vehicle pulls out in front of you.

Where is his mate?

[who will try to pull out in front of you as well, AT SPEED]

Then vehicle will turn off or stop shortly after.

[90% do]

FINALLY [at last, I am exhausted]

Remember that SPOKEN THOUGHTS are not part of the test. (You could still be asked to do some though.) It should have formed part of your Associate training, as it is an essential technique for improvement, an aid to better driving, and Observers use it to judge the overall skill of driver/driving.

You will NOT FAIL the test if you cannot use spoken thoughts, and some struggle. It could form part of a FIRST pass though.

The BASICS are looking to the Horizon then talking back to the front of the car.

It is okay to repeat.

Just mentioning ROAD SIGNS as SOON as they can be seen is good.

It is more likely, perhaps, that you will be better able/equipped to pass the test. At one point in my Testing career of over 30 years those who did spoken thoughts (then called Commentary) NEVER failed the test!!

Three reasons:

It is unlikely your spoken thoughts will include doing ALL the wrong things.

[I am going too fast. I will have to brake hard, overlap the gearchange, not bother to signal, and forget to look in the mirrors. YEAH RIGHT !!]

You come to test much more confident and better equipped.

I am totally overawed and cannot get a word in edgeways.

You could of course inject some *humour* to relax us! [unwittingly or otherwise]

Examples, all true.

Date: 7 December

Weather: bitterly cold, icy winds, light rain.

Location: coast road at Sandy Bay.

'I am travelling in a 30-mph speed limit. Watching out for holiday makers coming from the BEACH'. [Eh! You are joking]

'There is a left hand turning ahead on the left!'

'There was absolutely no noise when I drove through that icy puddle. Did you hear it?'

'You will notice as I drive along that at no times do my hands leave my arms.'

'Looking ahead I can see a lady crossing the road. That is a M&S dress she is wearing. I know this as my wife has one. [She wears it better tho' oops!]

'I am switching off the indicators now that it has stopped raining.'

So, go on now.

TALK AMONGST YOURSELVES

Or get the updated SPOKEN THOUGHTS BOOKLET from the group's resources.

Safe Driving

Andy Poulton

IAM RoadSmart Examiner South West area

SPOKEN THOUGHTS HIGHLIGHTS

USEFUL PHRASES, COMMENTS AND LINKS TO USE DURING SPOKEN THOUGHTS OR COMMENTARY

Vision is the most important sense for driving but you should learn to use all your senses to build up the fullest possible picture of yourself, your surroundings and your situation.

Observation is a key component of anticipation. Careful observation allows you to spot hazards and give yourself extra time to think, anticipate and react. You can then deal with unfolding hazards before they develop into dangerous situations.

But good anticipation involves more than just good observation. It means 'reading the road' and extracting the fullest meaning from your observations. This involves:

- 1] *Using your higher mental skills to interpret clues in the environment.*
- 2] *Developing your ability to scan your surroundings.*

Describe:- vehicle type and configuration; road traffic; weather conditions; speed; direction of travel; intentions.

School warning sign:- children are crossing; vehicles/buses stopping/pulling out.

Wheelie bins.

Rubbish bags.

Recycling bins.

Every day is a dustbin day somewhere:- bin lorry just around the corner.

Mirror on the roadside means hidden entrance.

The more the paint, the more the danger.

When brake lights come on, the brakes are on.

Skid marks:- someone else's mistake - make sure we do not make the same mistake; difficult or unusual junction layout; presence of a hazard as yet unseen.

Phone/post box on the left or right:- check opposite for pedestrians.

Pedestrian controlled lights:- check for the wait light or red/green man on the box.

Approaching pedestrian crossings:- check left and right footpaths.

Bus stops on a bus route:- looking out for the buses.

Empty bus stops:- bus around the corner.

Feet visible under the vehicle.

Driver in the driver's seat, vehicle stationary.

No footpaths:- looking out for pedestrians who may be on the wrong side of the road.

M.P.H. F.P.S. O.S.D.

Two second time gaps.

Standard driving position.

Always looking for the lurker behind the LGV.

Positioning my vehicle just to the left of the centre line (nearside/offside etc.)

Travelling in the right position on the road, at the right time, in the right place, in the right gear.

Green traffic light can only go to amber then red.

Coarse/fine road surfaces, high/low skid resistance, shell grip.

Gaps in the hedge afford alternative views.

Shadows falling across give early warning of oncoming vehicles.

Gaps in the shadows could mean blind entrances.

Every puddle hides a mineshaft.

Built up area ahead:- change of speed limit.

Lamp posts ahead:- change of speed limit.

Lamp posts ahead:- side road or entrance.

Cluster of lamp posts ahead:- roundabout or junction.

Every village may have a shop, post office, garage etc.

Scuffed or damaged verges:- heavy or large vehicles ahead.

Rubbed out white lines:- vehicles cutting the corners, tight bend.

Large vehicles/delivery vans in town may stop, pull in.

Row of parked cars:- check for pedestrian movement; exhaust smoke; brake lights; indicators; doors opening.

Railway line alongside road:- road may go left/right over/under ahead; tight bends.

River alongside the road:- road may go left/right and over ahead; tight bends; risk of flooding/debris.

Mud on road:- agricultural vehicles; cattle; farm vehicles ahead.

Grass cuttings, smell of grass/hay:- grass cutting vehicle ahead.

Hedge trimmings in road:- hedge trimmer around next bend.

Taxi ahead:- may pull over to make pick up.

Advanced warning of road works:- may be traffic control, will be red; men working with equipment in the road may not hear approach.

Person carrying petrol can:- broken down vehicle nearby.

Sheepdog entering a field:- may be sheep in the road.

Animal/horse droppings:- has it been driven over or is it fresh!

Aircraft with undercarriage down:- airfield nearby; motorists distracted.

Road surface wet under a vehicle:- someone about to alight or return to vehicle.

Newly repaired tarmac/potholes:- workmen nearby.

Balloons in the sky:- 'chase' vehicles following; drivers and other motorists distracted.

Safety cameras:- drivers braking suddenly.

Person pushing an empty pushchair:- school or child nearby.

No gap in the trees ahead:- road curves to the left or right.

Left bend is usually followed by a right bend; right bend followed by a left bend.

Ice cream vans, mobile shops:- watch out for children/pedestrians.

Pedal cyclists looking over their shoulders:- will pull out/turn.

Cyclists travelling in a small/large group.

Motorway access points/slip roads:- drivers pulling out.

Emergency vehicles may be in pairs or convoy.

Emergency vehicles:- incident ahead.

Accidents:- drivers 'rubber necking'.

Telecom engineers may work in pairs.

Warning of car boot sale, steam fair, crop circles:- irregular traffic pattern/flows.

Burning off on the fields:- smoke across the road.

Classic cars in large groups:- rally nearby.

Drivers talking on mobiles:- poor driving standard.

Drivers talking to themselves or on hands free mobiles:- poor driving standard.

Driver with attention seeking children in rear seats.

Pedestrian walking with a dog lead:- where is the dog?

Vehicle pulls out of junction ahead:- may have a following vehicle pull out.

Vehicle pulls out of junction ahead:- will stop or turn off shortly after.

Person wandering around in night attire!

Lights on oncoming vehicles:- inclement weather ahead.

Slow moving vehicle in town:- looking for premises or parking.

School sign ahead:- time of the day, day of the week.

Learner driver or P-plated vehicle ahead:- unpredictable movements.

Inclement weather conditions:- drivers not cleared windows inside or out.

Public footpaths on left or right:- where they start, they finish!

Exhaust smoke/steam from car in front:- just set off, may not be concentrating.

Slow painted on road means Special Look Ot, Watch!

One slow painted on road, one KSI, two slows, two KSI's.

Scanning:- FAR, NEAR, SIDES, INTERIOR and REAR.

SAFE DRIVING

Andy Poulton

IAM RoadSmart Examiner South West area

ANSWERS TO QUIZ on P.15

- 1: Physical (road surfaces, bends, junctions including roundabouts etc), People (position and movement of other drivers, riders, pedestrians etc), and Weather (ice, snow, rain, poor visibility, etc) (ref: "Roadcraft" page 47).
- 2: The Morris Oxford.
- 3: It is a legal requirement to follow them: Vehicles are legally required to travel around the carriageway and not across, or to the right, of the central white island.
- 4: To make them conspicuous (stand out), when they are placed in a position with a background that would make them inconspicuous (ref. Traffic Signs manual).
- 5: 14.50
- 6: A Glow Plug.
- 7: Far enough to see the vehicle's tyres on the tarmac ("Tyres on tarmac").
- 8: 70 mph

SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER EVENTS

Thursday, 17 September, at 19.30. This will be a Zoom meeting with Leigh Woodham, a solicitor and SWAM member, speaking about some case studies connected with motoring.

Thursday, 15 October, at 19.30. This will also be a Zoom meeting and the speaker will be Shaun Cronin, Area Service Delivery Manager for our area, giving us the benefit of his long experience of driving.

An invitation to each of these Zoom meetings will be on the website a few days before the meeting.

FUN CORNER

What do you call a funny motorbike? *A Yamahahaha!*

What kind of car does a Jedi drive? *A Toy-Yoda.*

Where do Volkswagens go when they get old? *The old Volks home.*

A cowboy walks into a German car showroom and says: *'Audi!'*

Two fish are sitting in a tank. One looks over at the other and says: *"Here, do you know how to drive this thing?"*

Get a new car for your spouse... *It'll be a great trade!*

Two cheese trucks ran into each other. *De brie was everywhere.*

What did one traffic light say to the other traffic light? *Don't look now, I'm changing!*

My wife bet me that I couldn't make a car out of spaghetti. *You should have seen her face when I drove pasta!*

PLEASE NOTE

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