

**Devizes Town Hall**



# Forward

**Newsletter of  
Somerset & Wiltshire Advanced  
Motorists**

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

Registered Charity No 1050592

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[Please pass this on to potential new members to join SWAM.]

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# Somerset & Wiltshire Advanced Motorists

(Registered Charity No. 1050592)

NOVEMBER 2020—  
FEBRUARY 2021

## *Forward*

Issue 3

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## **NOVEMBER MEETING – QUESTIONS PLEASE!**

At our November meeting, to be held on Zoom because of the current restrictions, we are holding a Question and Answer session. Some of our team of National Observers will be on hand to answer any questions you may have on advanced driving.

To get the maximum benefit from this session we are asking for your questions beforehand, so please send your questions by Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> November, to Clare Hogg, by email to [accounts@swam-iam.org.uk](mailto:accounts@swam-iam.org.uk), by phone to 01749 343059, or by post to 4 Great Ostry, Shepton Mallet, BA4 5TT.

This is your opportunity to ask those questions that occur to you while driving: What was the best way to tackle that situation? How should I have dealt with that problem? Was there a better way to negotiate that hazard? Don't miss it.

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the latest edition of *Forward* which is once again accompanied by a form to complete to tell us how you want to pay your fees for next year. Many of you have already returned your forms and thank you for doing so in such good time. For those who have not yet completed it, please will you return it to Clare Hogg by the end of November. She will then follow up any that haven't been returned. See the article on page 15 for more details.

In this issue we have reports of two interesting Zoom meetings which were held in July and September and an outdoor Slow Manoeuvring Experience which the participants enjoyed in August. Currently we are having to hold all our 'indoor' meetings via Zoom because of coronavirus restrictions. These have the advantage that members who are normally unable to attend meetings in person can join in, but they have the disadvantage that those who are not on the internet are not able to attend. We report on the meetings in full so that all members get the benefit in the end.

We are welcoming a large number of Associates in this issue as those who joined early in the year were unable to start their course until after observing restarted, and several others have joined since. Congratulations, too, to our first two test passes since lockdown,

Robert Collins and Robin Eaton.

Helen Schofield, our President, has written an interesting article (see page 16) about driving post-lockdown and how revising advanced driving techniques before undertaking a long journey for the first time in a while helped her to focus on her driving and keep safe.

Our November meeting is going to be a Question and Answer session. We can't easily hold an Open Forum in the way we might have done in the past, with questions being asked from the floor, and so we are asking for questions to be submitted beforehand and some of our National Observers will answer them. Details are on page 3.

As we can't hold a social evening in December as we normally would, we are having a Zoom meeting and our speaker is from Scotland. This is one of the advantages of holding meetings online, that it doesn't matter where the speaker lives. In July our speaker was at home in Worthing, and Allan Kelenfoldi will be speaking from Ayrshire. Please join us if you can.

*Clare Hogg*  
*John Morley*  
*Sue Phillips*

**The next edition of *Forward* will be published in February 2021. Please submit motoring-related articles and / or digital photographs to the Editors (*who reserve the right to edit them*) by Friday 8 January at the latest. Names of authors and their home addresses should be disclosed to the Editors who will withhold them from publication on request.**

## GROUP NEWS

**The July meeting** was again held by Zoom because of the coronavirus pandemic. SWAM Chairman, John Morley, introduced the speaker, Graham Feest, who is a Road Safety consultant, and he joined us from his home in Worthing, West Sussex. He introduced himself by telling us about the positions he had held in Road Safety with various local government authorities. He was also Head of Road Safety at the IAM at one time, and he is on the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety among other roles. He now runs a road safety consultancy, the UK Road Safety Network. This organisation publishes a monthly newsletter, *Traffic Safety Roads*. If you wish to receive monthly emails you can enrol by going to [www.grahamfeest.com](http://www.grahamfeest.com) and you will find articles and information about a wide range of topics to do with road safety.

Graham reminded us that we are all involved in road safety whenever we use the roads, whether as pedestrians, cyclists, car drivers or motorcyclists.

He gave us some statistics about road fatalities in Great Britain (excluding Northern Ireland) which showed that until about 2010, road fatalities were declining, but that over the last decade they had levelled, although the overall number of casualties was continuing to decline. It is interesting that the severity of the crash does not necessarily relate to the severity of the injuries. Sometimes a less severe crash can cause fatalities, whilst a more severe crash can cause no injuries at all. We tend to be hung up on the number of

fatalities and not on reducing the number of crashes.

Graham showed us some interesting statistics for the different categories of road user killed on our roads in 2018:

Cyclists: 99

Car occupants: 777

Pedestrians: 456

Motorcyclists: 354

Children (0-15): 48

Young drivers (17-25): 99

The low figure for children is a bit of a surprise to most people, and another encouraging detail is that the number of 17-25 year old drivers being killed in 2018 was fewer than in 2017 which, in turn, was fewer than in 2016. One reason for this may be that young people are learning to drive when older, e.g. in their final year of university. Another is that 17-year olds are not necessarily driving after passing their test, possibly because of the cost of insurance, awareness of the environment, or the cost of motoring. Also, some of the recent changes to the driving test are improving the standard of new drivers, e.g. driving independently and not just following instructions. This is thought to be the case but there is no data yet.

A question was asked about the breakdown of cyclist deaths on main roads versus country roads. Graham said that the breakdown was available if you examined the data in great detail but he didn't have the information to hand.

One of the reasons for cyclist deaths

is vehicles turning left in front of a cyclist. The relationship between HGVs and cyclists is improving with more training. John Morley said that, in his experience on country roads HGV drivers were very considerate of cyclists. Cyclists suffer from not being seen and an underestimate of the speed at which they are travelling. Other problems are car doors opening, and car drivers passing too close.

So far as the children are concerned, some will be cyclists, some pedestrians, and some passengers. The breakdown used to be a third each, but now the majority are pedestrians. There are fewer in cars because child car seats have improved.

Graham then showed us a video and asked the questions: How many deaths are acceptable on our roads? What is the reason for these people being killed? Some of the answers were: careless driving, bad driving, and not wearing seat belts. What single thing needs to happen for these people not to be killed? To which the answer was: avoiding having the collision.

In 1999-2000 there were 111 fatal accidents in the workplace and there are a number of reasons why these people died, including unsafe working practices and not following instructions. With road casualties, we need to stop the crash happening in the first place and not just rely on seat belts etc.

Why are we so blasé about crashes on the road? There is an attitude of 'they are going to happen, so what?' and, unless you are personally affected, it is easy to be blasé about it. The government is trying to do

something about the situation and has a strategy that government grants have to incorporate policies about clean air, the environment, and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It is also trying to encourage people to use public transport rather than cars, and to think about how they move around and consider alternatives to the car. There is a mentality of 'have car, must use' and some parents driving their children to school end up parking a long way away from the school and walking further than if they had walked from home!

At least that was the plan until this year. With the pandemic, the government's mantra has been 'Walk, Cycle, or Go by car. Avoid Public Transport'. Graham said that normally he uses the bus, not the car, to go the two and a half miles to town, but now he doesn't want to. Similarly, he doesn't want to use public transport to go to London.

The result will be that people will use their cars more and avoid public transport. The London underground, for example, now has only 60% of the passengers it had pre-pandemic. People feel more protected in a car.

Graham talked about wearing face masks / coverings while driving. A nurse who was out with a driving instructor asked him if wearing a face mask was making him feel tired. Nurses are told to take their masks off every two hours in order to take deep breaths of fresh air. Wearing a face mask means that you are breathing in CO<sub>2</sub> and that makes you tired. Therefore, drivers who are wearing face masks are at risk of being tired if driving for a long time – taxi drivers are at high risk, for exam-

ple. There is no need to wear a face mask if you are on your own or driving with family. However, somebody who has been shopping in a supermarket wearing a face mask might keep it on during the drive home because they don't want to take it off until they can wash their hands.

Graham then went on to tackle the subject of parking on the pavement. It is a hot topic at the moment because there are more people walking. Parking on the pavement forces pedestrians onto the road and the government wants to make it illegal at any time. At present drivers can be prosecuted for causing an obstruction or for driving on the pavement. The law which governs this is the 1846 Carriage Act which says that you can't use a wheeled vehicle on the pavement, which would include prams and wheelchairs and so is in need of updating. West Sussex wants to introduce this law, and Wales too. London says that drivers should not park on the pavement but there are exceptions.

Other measures taken recently include narrowing the road to aid social distancing by making pavements and cycle lanes wider. There are also more 20mph limits and Wales is to have all urban areas at 20mph. There are new 'pop-up' cycle lanes, Covid-19 cycle routes, which are a temporary measure but which may be made permanent. Some cycle lanes have 'overtaking clearance markings' for overtaking cyclists, so the cycle lane is 0.75 metres wide, and overtaking clearance is 1.5 metres.

Another measure to improve the roads for safety is to close streets near schools. This improves the air

quality near the school and discourages parents from driving their children to school. In some areas these are permanent closures and in others, just during school hours.

Graham next spoke about e-scooters. A trial is being run in various parts of the country, including London, where e-scooters can be used on public roads. They must be rented and privately owned e-scooters are not allowed on the roads. They will be limited to 15.5mph; users must be 16+ and hold a full or provisional driving licence, but there is no training for using them; a helmet is not compulsory but is advised, and they are prohibited from being used on pavements. The UK is one of the last countries in Europe to allow them on roads.

Graham also said that electric vehicles are becoming more important and that petrol and diesel cars will gradually be phased out.

A question was asked about wearing visors and / or face masks while driving. Some drivers wear both. Research into how long the coronavirus lasts on different surfaces indicates that it lasts longer on plastic than on other surfaces. A suggestion was made that a visor protects you from other people, whereas a face mask protects other people from you. SWAM is providing visors for Observers to wear, when going out with their Associates, for extra protection.

Graham concluded with an amusing video showing the importance of taking road signs seriously. The video showed a stretch of road with vehicles travelling fast along it past a

road sign saying: 'Speed enforced by aircraft'. Drivers who were thinking the sign was a waste of money were startled to have an aircraft swooping down on them.

John Morley concluded the meeting by thanking Graham for his interesting talk.

**The August meeting** was an outdoor meeting to practise slow manoeuvring. We arrived at Beckington Memorial Hall to find the car park was full – oh my goodness! We were going to use the car park for the parallel park and reverse around the corner of the Memorial building; no chance of that! At least the weather was nice and sunny with great visibility.

Luckily we arrived early enough to find alternative locations; there was a good place to parallel park on the road opposite the Hall and this was en route to the three point turn – perfect. Then we found an interesting corner on a local estate road which had good visibility and although it started off with a 90° turn when you reversed around it, the pavement cut in at a further angle which had to be navigated successfully to end up the required 10 metres from the corner.



Thanks to Alfie's Driving School for this photo

Our intrepid members turned up on time and parked in the car park. The Observers wore their PPE and kept their social distance. Each arrival was briefed on how and when to

navigate the three manoeuvres.

The parallel park was first and Lindsay Flower was determined to restrict the space to 1½ car lengths by placing a stick on the road. After a couple of goes to perfect the procedure, the participant then drove up the road 50 yards for the three-point turn.

David Major in his yellow jacket expertly supervised the three-point turn which was in a quiet road opposite a lay-by. Each member had three goes so they were facing the right way to drive to the final task which was a two-minute drive away.

The reverse around a corner was manned by Peter Huntington and each driver had several opportunities to complete this. Although it was a difficult corner our members took it slowly and measuredly and completed the exercise successfully. Generally, each attempt was more successful than the previous one. Well done to everyone.

The three Observers met for a quick debrief and all agreed everyone had a jolly good time.

We had a couple of emails thanking the group and this was the best:

"Thank you so much for this evening's Slow Manoeuvring Experience. Very much appreciated indeed. I found the experience really helpful and enjoyable. Hopefully I will retain all that I have learnt. Please also pass on my thanks to Peter, Lindsay and David, for being so gentle with us, informative and encouraging too. It was also very nice to meet the other participants.

I am really pleased that I came.  
Very Best Regards J"

Many thanks to Lindsay, David and Peter for conducting the meeting.



**The September meeting** was again held via Zoom rather than at Beckington Memorial Hall because of Covid-19.

Apologies were received from our Chairman, John Morley, and in his absence Lindsay Flower acted as Chair.

Lindsay introduced Leigh Woodham, a solicitor and a member of SWAM who was giving the presentation. She said that Leigh's talk would serve to demystify the law about road traffic collisions and personal injury. There would be a question and answer session at the end.

Leigh began his talk by explaining that he had changed the course of his career to personal injury law after his father had broken both arms in an accident. His firm, Ince Metcalfes, is based in Bristol.

He said that if drivers break the criminal law, they become criminals, but if they break the civil law they end up paying compensation.

In the past, when dealing with personal injury claims, the judge had to decide whose account was most likely to be true whenever the two sides were in direct conflict.

Nowadays, there is an emphasis on both sides working together with round table discussions. The solicitor's duty is to the court, not to the person paying the fees.

Leigh explained that the key principle behind personal injury claims is to put the victim, as best you can, back into the position they would have been in had they not been injured – they should be compensated for pain and suffering and reimbursed for

financial losses and expenses incurred. He cited two examples:

1) an actress who had severe concussion and a minor brain injury which prevented her from learning her lines. She used her compensation to hire a theatre and put on her own play.

2) an elderly lady who suffered a fractured wrist, resulting in a friend doing her housework and shopping. She used her compensation to take her friend on a cruise.

Leigh explained the nuts and bolts of a personal injury claim:

Lodge a claim form;

Other driver's Insurers investigate;

Gather evidence if liability is not accepted;

Value "pain and suffering" award;

Value losses and expenses;

Negotiate / settle by trial – 98% of cases are settled out of court.

Next Leigh explained how to make a claim – either bringing the claim yourself, or instructing a personal injury solicitor.

If your injury lasts more than four weeks, he suggests seeking legal advice. He advised against accepting the Insurance Company's first offer, because once accepted, you can't go back, but stressed the importance of being honest.

There should not be any legal costs to pay upfront but you should ask what cost contribution is to be made.

The amount of compensation for injuries is undervalued, Leigh feels, especially in cases of total blindness (£252,180) and quadriplegia (£304,630

– £379,100) because the amount is decided by how much judges have awarded in the past.

Claims for loss of earnings and expenses must be supported by receipts, invoices, salary slips etc, and can cover items such as the cost of private medical insurance, loss of career and loss of enjoyment, prosthetics and help from others ('over and above').

Leigh said that his was an interesting job, with no two cases ever the same.

The second part of Leigh's talk was about Road Traffic Collisions. He began by explaining what you should do if you are involved in a crash:

1. Stop somewhere safe.
  2. Call 999 if there are injuries, if the road is blocked, or if there are suspicions of drink, drugs or a scam.
  3. Exchange details – the name and address of the driver and the car owner, if different.
- If details are not exchanged, report the incident within 24 hours.
4. Take photos of both vehicles and the scene of the accident – if it is safe to do so.
  5. Names and addresses of witnesses.
  6. As soon as you get home, draft a witness statement including weather and road conditions, draw a sketch and contact your insurer.

Beware of apologising!

Leigh asked to what standard are people expected to drive?

The answer is to the standard of the ordinary skilful driver – perfection is not expected but driving with

'reasonable care' is.

But he warned that not everyone will drive well and there will always be poor drivers on the road. As Advanced Drivers our skills of observation will help us be aware of poor drivers and help us anticipate what other drivers might do.

Learner drivers are expected to drive to the same standard as fully qualified drivers and driving instructors have a duty to do whatever can be reasonably expected to prevent a less skilful driver acting carelessly.

Emergency drivers are exempt from some rules, for example stopping at red traffic lights, but their speed must give reasonable control.

If you are in an emergency situation, the usual rules still apply – you are not allowed to exceed the speed limit even in an emergency!

If a member of the public collides with an emergency vehicle using 'blues and twos', he will be 100% liable. If the emergency vehicle is using only one warning signal, the driver will be 60% liable.

Leigh went on to say that truth, not proof, is important in civil cases and indicated the importance of dash cam footage, photos and other evidence. Telling the truth is vital because liars are inconsistent.

A criminal conviction does not necessarily make a driver 100% liable, nor do drink driving and speeding.

Leigh quoted a case where driver 1 is over the legal alcohol limit and is convicted of driving under the influence. However, it was found that driver 2 caused the accident and

driver 1 could not have prevented the crash even if he had been sober. Thus driver 2 would be found 100% liable in a civil court.

Leigh asked if apportioning blame mattered? For example, with rear end shunts there is the presumption that the driver behind is responsible because he was not driving at a safe distance. But did the driver in front have a good reason to do an emergency stop? Did he give a misleading signal? Is this a case of scammers or fraud?



What is a good reason for doing an emergency stop?

There is a duty to stop if you might hit an animal, such as a dog, or a farm animal.

If you hit such an animal, you need to call the Police and await instructions.

There is no legal duty to stop for wild animals such as deer, badgers or other wild animals, although it would be considered reasonable to brake suddenly in such cases.

If you hit one of these animals, you should inform the Local Authority if the animal has been killed, or call the RSPCA if it is injured.

However, if you performed an emergency stop for a cat, or a squirrel, or a spider, for example,

and a car crashed into you, you would be liable.

If you have a spider in your car, the best advice is to keep your composure, and pull over when safe to do so!

Leigh continued on to misleading signals. If a driver gives a misleading signal, which results in a collision he is only two thirds to blame, the other driver has to take one third of the blame.

As Advanced Drivers, we are aware of misleading signals and drive at a safe distance behind the vehicle in front.

Leigh gave some examples where flashing headlights as a warning led to apportionment of blame differing in different courts and warned that headlights should only be flashed to make someone aware of your presence. Evidence from a dash cam can be important in such cases. He warned motorcyclists to take great care when passing stationary traffic.

Although the use of seatbelts is compulsory, a discount can still be applied when injuries occur.

Leigh went on to consider pedestrians. He said that up to the 1920s everyone could walk on the road, and vehicles had to avoid them. In 2020 the Highway Code puts the duty of care on to the pedestrian, and they should show due care and consideration for others. Leigh said that pedestrians should remember that cars are offensive weapons. He warned that if a pedestrian runs into the road with no warning, he could be found 100% liable for any resulting accident.

Leigh finished by giving some potential defences for a crash that a driver had caused but said was not his fault that might be considered in court: it was an 'Inevitable accident', a 'Medical emergency', an 'Involuntary act', an 'Act of God', the 'Agony of the moment'.

### **Questions and Answers:**

The first question was about the problem of quantifying pain and suffering. While some injuries are obvious, others are not and some people might attempt to exaggerate.

Leigh said that as well as a letter from the GP, there is also an independent medical report from a consultant which is very thorough. Consultants have their own tests, notice patient's reactions and report back to the solicitor. He said he always points out to clients that exaggeration will be found out.

Next, a comment from a member who knew a driver who had suffered a heart attack whilst driving and wrote off two cars. It was held that it was not his fault and he was not prosecuted.

Leigh remarked that reasonableness, not perfection, was aimed for.

The next questioner asked if you have to exchange details of insurance companies at the scene of an accident.

Leigh said this is not absolutely necessary if you have the driver's details, because the information will be on the database and not everyone has those details to hand. If the person won't give their name, take the car registration number, the make and model of the car and any

other details for recognition checks later in case of false number plates. Gather evidence, with photos if possible, perhaps a witness, and look around to see if there any Local Authority or shop cameras nearby in case the person does not report the accident. If you have a dash cam, tell your insurance company so that they can see the footage.

The next question was about accompanying a learner driver. If a learner driver has an incident, how would the insurance company view the incident in the absence of dual controls?

Leigh answered that in such an event the qualified driver should do what is reasonably possible to prevent an accident.

If a driver has no insurance, compensation is paid by the government – to which all insurance companies have to contribute.

A member asked how difficult it is to obtain witness statements.

Leigh said that people were usually willing to give their details to a driver involved in an accident and then the solicitors take their statements. They then see how strong the case is and advise their client accordingly.

Leigh continued by saying that the time from the day of the accident to compensation being paid can vary from four months to seven years, partly depending on the extent of and duration of the injuries. The average case takes about 18 months, but can be quicker when liability is accepted.

The final question led to a great deal of discussion. The questioner asked

if he had any responsibility to report a driver who had been told that his eyesight did not meet current DVLA standards but who considered that this was not the same as being told not to drive.

It was felt that the eye specialists should have told the DVLA and that the driver should have reported himself – in the event of an accident his insurance company would claim from him as he had breached the terms of his contract.

Another member said that opticians are not allowed to tell the DVLA – they tell the driver who then becomes responsible for reporting it.

Another person said that it was very difficult when a family member continues to drive knowing they shouldn't and wondered whether we, as Advanced Drivers, should take any responsibility. One response to this was that people should not be whistle blowers in spite of knowing about a driver's condition.

A member who had googled the matter during the discussion reported that it was indeed the driver who must tell the DVLA about their illnesses and eyesight.

It was considered that doctors and opticians should give their patients a letter if their condition prevented driving which could be forwarded to the DVLA.

The discussion ended and Lindsay thanked Leigh for his interesting and thought-provoking talk.

She thanked everyone for joining the Zoom meeting.

Following the meeting, Leigh forwarded the following information

to the group regarding the responsibility to inform the DVLA if a driver is unfit to drive for medical reasons:

*Doctors are not supposed to inform the DVLA if a patient is declared unfit to drive. They should tell the patient that their condition might affect their ability to drive and tell the patient that they have a duty to notify the DVLA about their own condition. If the doctor later becomes aware that the patient is continuing to drive when it is unsafe for them to do so, they should make every reasonable effort to persuade them to stop. If they do not manage to persuade the patient to stop driving, or they discover that the patient is continuing to drive against their advice, the doctor may then report the patient to the DVLA on the grounds that it is in the public interest to do so.*

*If a patient does not understand the doctor's advice because of their illness (eg dementia), then the doctor should inform the DVLA straight away.*

*However, before contacting the DVLA, the doctor should try to inform the patient of their intention to write to the DVLA. If the patient objects, the doctor has to consider their reasons for objecting, but after considering those reasons, may go ahead and inform the DVLA anyway if they believe the patient may cause someone injury by driving. The doctor should tell their patient in writing once they have reported them, and make a note on the patient's record.*

**GMC Guidance (25/04/2017)**

Thank you, Leigh, for your helpful research.

## *We Welcome New Associates*

<b>Warren Beattie</b>	[Observer: Mark Ellis]
<b>Liam Boulton</b>	[Observer: Mark Ellis]
<b>Robin Eaton</b>	[Observer: Martyn Buckland]
<b>Sandra England</b>	[Observer: Colin Nunn]
<b>Roy Evans</b>	[Observer: Nick Elton]
<b>Gemma Geoghegan</b>	[Observer: Adam Gale]
<b>Michael Hutt</b>	[Observer: Mark Ellis]
<b>Anthea Kemp</b>	[Observer: Lindsay Flower]
<b>George Knibb</b>	[Observer: John Morley]
<b>Robert Loescher</b>	[Observer: John Morley]
<b>Chris Miell</b>	[Observer: Jeffrey Vincent]
<b>Patricia Pitt</b>	[Observer: Lindsay Flower]
<b>Tanya Sparey</b>	[Observer: Ben Rushgrove]
<b>Harvey Squire</b>	[Observer: Peter Huntington]

## **We Also Congratulate**

### *IAM Test Pass*

<b>Robert Collins</b>	observed by Graham Bennett
<b>Robin Eaton</b>	observed by Martyn Buckland

## MEMBERSHIP OF SWAM

*This article is being reprinted from the last issue of Forward for the benefit of those members who have not yet acted on it, as a reminder to let us know how you wish to pay your fees for 2021 (for which there is a separate form which you should receive with this copy of Forward). We are aware that some members may have slipped through the net in receiving Forward, usually because we have had an incorrect email address for you. If you are in this situation, we are very sorry that you may have missed out on information regarding SWAM and its meetings over the last few months. We have been trying to make our database as accurate as possible and will continue doing so until we are sure that we have got it right. If we have not received your form by the end of November, Clare Hogg will attempt to contact you by email, phone or letter, and will try to get any problems sorted out.*

Membership of BADAM and MAM automatically transferred to SWAM at the time of the merger. Fees for 2021 for SWAM 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. As it is unlikely that the January meeting will be held in person at Beckington, this last option is not available for 2021. Please will you return this form as soon as possible to the Treasurer, Mrs Clare Hogg, 4 Great Ostry, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, BA4 5TT.

### **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 and Wiltshire Advanced Motorists (alternatives allowed are: Som and Wilts Adv Motorists or SWAM)

Sort code; 30-99-51

Account number: 01059646

Start date: 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

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## DRIVING POST-LOCKDOWN—by Helen Schofield

When lockdown came there were aspects that were a novelty. An empty diary, beautiful weather and the encouragement to get out and exercise. I was in the fortunate position not to have to worry about work, income or anyone at particular risk. One major advantage was the empty road – and I was able to enjoy getting about on my bicycle – going places I would usually avoid. It was fun travelling along the A36 on my way to Bradford on Avon and only meeting other cyclists and returning through Sally in the Woods, along the Batheaston bypass to be waved at by the passenger in the only vehicle to pass me – a police car!

After five weeks of virtually no driving I needed to make a three hour return journey to West Sussex on an urgent family matter. I found myself somewhat reluctant to get back behind the wheel for such a trip having only driven less than two miles on two occasions during lockdown. I knew

that the trip would be good for the car – but how about for me?

This is where articles reminding us of the various principles of advanced / better driving, such as those in the last edition of *Forward*, can be helpful, and I found it useful to do some revision before my long journey. It is good just to consider the system of car control and observation links.

For the outward journey I decided to take the scenic route and avoid the motorways. I felt that this would be more relaxing and enable me to get back into the swing of driving. I gave myself a running commentary every now and then. This helped me focus and consider why I was driving as I was – and not relying on 'habit'. I found that I really enjoyed being behind the wheel again .

However the return journey was a different matter. The weather had change dramatically and under normal circumstances I would have



elected not to drive and stayed the night. Knowing the weather forecast I decided to make the return journey on the motorway route – all was well until the M4 near Newbury when the weather became atrocious – heavy driving rain with strong side winds. Again, giving myself a commentary helped me to keep focused. The rain was so bad that I and a high proportion of the traffic had reduced our speed to 25 mph and were driving in the first lane. Visibility was minimal.

I was considering that I should stop – but that presented a dilemma – where to stop. I was 15 miles from the next service station. There were numerous vehicles on the hard shoulder – with the hazards lights on – almost nose to tail in some places,

so it would have been difficult to pull off in an emergency. By this time the traffic on the motorway was travelling at 20 mph and yet there were cars and lorries passing at inappropriate speeds for the visibility and state of the road. Likewise – the use of the two second rule was ignored by many cars and there were many times when brake lights were seen. Even when the rain had stopped, the surface water combined with the speed of the traffic caused a great deal of spray which hampered visibility.

I know the Highway Code states that one must not stop on the hard shoulder except in an emergency – but what constitutes an emergency?

Your thoughts please.

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## **KEEPING ALL ROAD USERS SAFE—by Helen Schofield**

In the electronic IAM RoadSmart newsletter there was the opportunity to complete a survey concerning the Government's changes to the Highway Code apropos cyclists and pedestrians and motorists. I fit into all three categories so happily completed the survey. I then went to the Department for Transport website to read their consultative paper – which gave a very different aspect of the proposed changes. The introduction states:

“The introduction to The Highway Code will be updated to include a:

‘Hierarchy of Road Users’ and new Rule H1 which ensures that those road users who can do the greatest harm have the greatest responsibility to reduce the danger or threat they

may pose to other road users. The objective of the hierarchy is not to give priority to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders in every situation, but rather to ensure a more mutually respectful and considerate culture of safe and effective road use that benefits all users;

new Rule H2 to create clearer and stronger priorities for pedestrians, particularly at junctions, and clarify where pedestrians have right of way;

new Rule H3 which places a requirement on drivers to give priority to cyclists when they are turning into or out of a junction, or changing direction or lane, just as they would to other motor vehicles.”

The new text within the introduction to The Highway Code will read:

“The aim of The Highway Code is to promote safety on the road, whilst also supporting a healthy, sustainable and efficient transport system;

Hierarchy of Road Users: The ‘Hierarchy of Road Users’ is a concept which places those road users most at risk in the event of a collision at the top of the hierarchy. The road users most likely to be injured in the event of a collision are pedestrians, in particular children, older adults and disabled people, followed by cyclists, horse riders and motorcyclists. The hierarchy does not remove the need for everyone to

behave responsibly. The following H rules clarify this concept:

Rule H1: It is important that ALL road users are aware of The Highway Code, are considerate to other road users and understand their responsibility for the safety of others.”

*[There are others not included here.]*

I appreciate that IAM RoadSmart represents the motorist but I felt that the slant of some of their questions was very much motorist biased.

I strongly recommend that all go to the official website for the review of the Highway Code.

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## GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION INFORMATION FOR SWAM MEMBERS GDPR CONTRACT STATEMENT

SWAM is required, under GDPR regulations, to notify members each year of our contract with you regarding the data we hold about you and the way in which it may be used. Please read the following statement carefully.

Somerset and Wiltshire Advanced Motorists (SWAM) would like to thank you for being a member of the group. As part of your membership contract with us, we may contact you with information on training, committee matters, social events or group drives together with newsletters / magazines relating to the group and road safety.

Photographs, videos and written updates of SWAM events such as training, committee matters, social events or group drives, at which you

may be in attendance or referred to, may also be published on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc., in the group newsletter (*Forward*), on group related websites or in the press.

SWAM may also share your information with IAM RoadSmart in order to administer membership activities.

### **Option to withdraw from the above.**

You have a right to withdraw from receiving or participating in any of the above by contacting SWAM.

If you do not wish to receive information on training, committee, and social events, together with newsletters/magazines relating to the group and road safety, or if you

do not wish to appear in or be referred to in or on any group social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter etc, in the group newsletter, on group related websites or in the press, please contact the membership secretary, Peter Huntington,

either by email (membership@swam-iam.org.uk) or by post to: 17 Regents Field, Trossachs Drive, Bath, BA2 6RP. In addition to your full name, please give your IAM membership number.

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## SKILL AT THE WHEEL—3 by Andy Poulton

### DON'T BRAKE THE RULES!

One of which being:-

When I was training to be a Police Driver Trainer, I was given a new Vauxhall, a large open space, and a very, VERY, novice driver.

[One who had a short body and arms but very L-O-N-G legs such that every time he changed gear, he hit the steering wheel with his knee and we went across the road towards the oncoming cars. Oh, what fun.]

Sorry I digressed, *went off on one there*.

SO off I went with this novice and successfully taught him rapidly how to accelerate *and* change gear as well.

[As in ROADCRAFT chapter 5: Acceleration, Gear changing, Braking and Steering]

Then just as I was feeling ever so slightly smug MY supervising instructor said: – “Well done!” “You now have just 50 yards left to teach him the rest of the chapter HOW TO BRAKE AND STEER”

[I used to use that same cruel method when training new Police Driver trainers Locally, Regionally, Nationally, and Internationally. I expect they forgave me, even thanked me?]

#### Slowing down and stopping.

*It used to say MORE important than being able to accelerate and change gear is the ability to slow down or stop.*

Now:-

You need to be able slow down or stop smoothly *and* with your vehicle under full control. Anticipate the need to slow down or stop early and brake progressively. Being able to accurately estimate the required braking distance effort at different speeds is central to skilful driving.

There are TWO ways of slowing down (decelerating) or stopping.

- 1) Releasing or easing off the accelerator (acceleration sense);
- 2) Using the brakes.

1) is known as engine braking or using *Acceleration Sense*: this is defined as the ability to vary vehicle speed in response to changing road and traffic conditions by accurate use of the accelerator, so that you use the brakes LESS or NOT AT ALL.

It has many advantages as discussed on pages 92/93 of Chapter 5 of Roadcraft. However, it may operate more strongly on vehicles fitted with a retarder, electric vehicles or old stiff engines or diesels; or a lot less on some modern cars with eco systems keeping the throttle open but no fuel, low friction engine, over run, or coast mode with gearbox disconnected.

It is useful in slippery road conditions, but not by going down the gears 6-5-4-3-2, as GEARS are for GOING and BRAKES are for SLOWING.

2) therefore is for all normal driving. The most efficient way of slowing the car down, instead of relying on the clutch and gear box, is applying the normal braking, i.e. the foot brake.

### How much to use

The pressure on the footbrake and thus the brakes can be varied from a barely perceptible effect (just having the friction material of the pads against the discs or friction material of the shoes contacting the drums), to a full-on smoking, wheel locking, emergency STOP. [Sorry yes okay, you have ABS or ALB or EBA or EBD or whatever and that is not supposed to happen. Or tell that to the Police driver in a BRAND-NEW VOLVO who was on the M32 doing 120mph when a 'little old lady' pulled out in front in an old Morris Minor into lane 2. He locked up and TOTALLY flat spotted a new set of front tyres.]

### How to use it (Called Braking Sense)

Firstly, the brake pedal must not be used as a switch. You must develop a feel for it. No ON & OFF on the pedal (causing the vehicle to be unstable and the passengers SICK).

During all normal braking the foot is placed on the pedal and the 'free play' or spare travel is taken up. Often this brings on the BRAKE LIGHTS and gives a warning to the vehicles behind. Remember though that if pressure operated, or brake-by-wire or ECU (electronic control unit) managed, braking may have already occurred by the time the lights illuminate (check yours).

This pressure is now progressively built up for the desired amount of speed that needs to be lost; it can vary a little around that point, slightly on or off.

On completion, the pedal pressure is eased until the foot can be removed only when the pedal has gently rested back on the 'stop'. (NOT with a resounding clunk as the pedal hits the metal.)

This is also a good method of braking in an emergency! Because if you were to just HIT the brakes with the front wheels lightly laden 'unprogressively', chances are they may lock up into a skid. By building up the pressure, and thereby the weight transfer to the front wheels, this effect may be reduced.

Thus, the mottos:-

FEEL, FIRM and FEATHER. SINE WAVE BRAKING. TAPERED BRAKING. PROGRESSIVE BRAKING.

The advantages are:-

Allows other drivers time to react.

Prevents locked wheels.

Prevents skidding.

Saves wear and tear on brakes, tyres and suspension.

Saves fuel. [oh yes 'ECO' again]

Is more comfortable for the passengers.

### Stop it

When bringing the car to a halt you must try to avoid the 'Vicars' Curtsies'.

[NO, I am not trying to be irreverent. He said, knowing quite a few members, as it was a member who coined this phrase back in the 80s.]

It is the fact that no matter how slowly you are going or how little pressure there is on the brake pedal, *THE BRAKES WILL LOCK* when you come to a stop.

So, you must finely judge bringing the car to a halt so that the car neither dips at the front or settles at the rear. It may be called a 'Gliding Halt' and invariably means there is NO pressure on the brakes when the car actually stops.

Remember IF you were to cut the engine on a flat road and allow the car to coast it WILL roll to a halt. You just help it!

[Disclaimer please do not try this down Tog Hill, Redhill, Hursley Hill, or whatever – or check your NCB with your insurer first.]

### **QUESTION**

If when driving along a flat and level road at 40, and you brake the car's speed down to 30, then remove your foot quickly from the pedal. Does it:

carry on at 30?

speed up again?

carry on slowing down?

*Answer at end.*

### How Far

The GOOD advanced driver must know the overall stopping distances for the speeds achievable in the vehicle he is driving, AND relate them to everyday situations, circumstances, and distances on the road and in the traffic. Check now to see if you know what they are.

*Remember* that the Highway code gives the WORST case scenarios (e.g. a Bond Bug on BALD faulty tyres with serious old suspension on a contaminated road surface) and are considered by some to be HOPELESSLY out of date.

*Remember* also I was a Collision Investigator. I have a list of all the cars

**BRAKING** distances from 60MPH.

Some PREMIUM ranges of cars are capable of HALF those distances. However sorry to say some budget cars are TWICE those Highway code distances. [NOT illegal just, er, different.]

So, if you are in your new PORSCHE and one of those budget mobiles is behind you. THEIR braking distance INCLUDES YOUR CAR if asked to stop suddenly.

*Remember:-* If you double your speed you quadruple your braking distance.

*Remember:-* Braking distances are at least DOUBLED or QUADRUPLED in wet or icy conditions.

THE SAFE STOPPING DISTANCE RULE is always to be able to stop in the distance you see to be clear (safely and comfortably) on your own side of the road.

### Overall safe stopping distance

To work this out add THINKING distance to BRAKING distance.

*Thinking distance* is the distance travelled in the time between first observing the need for action and acting.

It can vary in five ways:-

- Speed of the car.

- Physical condition of the driver.

- Mental condition of the driver.

- Amount of concentration being applied.

- Whether they are expecting something to happen or not.

*Braking distance* is the distance need for braking.

It can vary in five ways:-

- Speed of the vehicle.

- Condition of the car.

- Condition of the road surface.

- Weather conditions.

- Whether you are going uphill or downhill.

## **BRAKING RULES**

*Approaching hazards.*

Consider:-

- Your initial speed.

- The road surfaces.

- The weather conditions.

- Road and traffic conditions.

### Corners and bends

Plan to avoid braking in corners and bends because it increases the demands on tyre grip. If you HAVE to brake apply the brakes gently and steadily.

Brake in plenty of time.

Adjust the brake pressure to the condition or grip of the road surface.

On steep winding descents brake firmly on the straights and *gently* on the bends – remember to use a lower gear where, when, and if appropriate, at an early stage in the descent. [This is an update]

**WHAT ABOUT THE PARKING BRAKE THEN, you ask!!!**

[Oh, alright there has to be one to ask.]

Some basics then:-

Its methodology, for applying, locking, releasing, use, technique, effectiveness, Manual/Auto etc, Auto ON Auto OFF etc, will vary TOTALLY between all the cars out there.

Check the manufacturer's handbook / instructions.

Yes, the parking brake should be applied, when you stop LONG ENOUGH for it to be applied (I suppose about a couple of seconds then, no delay or waiting) and only when stationary. Do not rush to apply it by taking your hand off the wheel as you approach the hazard. With experience you can judge whether you need to use it for every short stop.

Beware, though, of it NOT being applied for the exact moment you are shunted from behind by a vehicle at a crossing or junction, and you are pushed into the pedestrian or traffic flow!!

Always in the correct sequence dependent on the next move.

LONG stay which generally means Parking Brake Neutral.

(Red lights; Road works; Parking up; end of drive, for example.)

SHORT stay which generally means GBH – Gear (1<sup>st</sup> selected) before Hand-brake.

(Junctions, Roundabouts, give ways, pedestrian crossings., for example.)

*Andy's Top Tip 1:* Consider releasing your foot brake and applying the Parking brake to reduce glare for the driver behind you, if your vehicle allows it. However, some cars keep the brake lights on regardless.

*Andy's Top Tip 2:* After a 'Hot Stop', that is from high speed to a red light, avoid keeping your foot on the foot brake as it could cook the pads and callipers. Again, some cars disallow this with the 'AUTO' brake button set.

**ANSWER:**

Carries on slowing down.

HAPPY STOPPING

**Cheers**

**Andy POULTON**

Examiner, Region 1 South West

## FUTURE EVENTS

*All meetings are via Zoom for the next few months due to the current situation. We are aware that this disenfranchises some of our members who are not on the internet, and are sorry that this is the case, but as things are we are unable to hold meetings in person. By reporting all our meetings in detail in Forward we try to make sure that those who can't attend the meetings can still get the benefit of the content.*

**Thursday, 19 November 2020.** This meeting will take the form of a Question and Answer session. Some of our National Observers will answer any driving-related questions you may have, so please send us your questions about any aspect of advanced driving. Please submit your questions by Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> November, to Clare Hogg, by email to [accounts@swam-iam.org.uk](mailto:accounts@swam-iam.org.uk), by phone to 01749 343059, or by post to 4 Great Ostry, Shepton Mallet, BA4 5TT.

**Thursday, 17 December 2020.** Allan Kelenfoldi, from Ayrshire Advanced Motorists, will be talking to us about in-car technology, and tyres in particular. As the tyres are what keep us on the road, they are a very important topic to understand. Allan is a Business Development Manager, Trainer and Tyre Specialist with the Continental Tyre Group, so we are fortunate to have such an expert to speak to us.

**Thursday, 21 January 2021.** Our speaker will be Dan Cox, Road Safety Officer with Avon & Somerset police force. We will be showing a video from Avon and Somerset Police's virtual open day in 2020 showing Dan's work as a road safety officer. This includes education, engagement, preventative measures, learning from collisions and looking not to have road accidents in the first place. After the video Dan will answer any questions we may have.

## PLEASE NOTE

The views expressed in this Newsletter are those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by the Committee of Somerset & Wiltshire Advanced Motorists, nor by IAM RoadSmart.

Due acknowledgement is made whenever material is taken from other sources.

SWAM keeps names and addresses of members on computer to assist in Group administration. This information will not be passed outside IAM RoadSmart.

SWAM may from time to time publish photographs taken at group events in *Forward* and on the website, or display them at publicity events.

If you have any concerns or wish to opt out of having your photograph taken or published by SWAM, please email or ring the Secretary (details on page 2) and request an acknowledgement in writing.