



April / May 2020



For your diary Sunday Observed Drives



Sorry, dear reader, the Sunday Drives have been suspended until further notice but please be assured we will let you know when we can safely get back to normal.

Log on to our website where you can find back copies of the newsletter and where details of events will be published once confirmed. Whilst spending more time at home why not take the opportunity to explore iamroadsmart.com and your local pages

www.iamroadsmart.com/groups/walsallam/about-us/our-community

Dear Reader:

Before you read on, hopefully you may notice that in this edition I am trying **very** hard NOT to mention the dreaded C word!!! Editor Sandie



Committee meetings:

Usually on the second Tuesday of the month. Well, they were, but are currently suspended until further notice. Venue: Aldridge Community Centre.

We are always looking for new, willing, committee members - so please do consider joining the committee when they recommence. The minimum commitment is 2 hour attendance per month. Why not come along and sit in on a meeting before deciding whether you wish to become more involved.



Your 2020 diary - Suspended until further notice



Group's AGM:

Again, suspended until further notice, we will let you know the new arrangements as soon as possible.



However

Celebratory Afternoon Tea

Here's something to look forward to. To celebrate the Group 50th anniversary we are delighted to tell you that the Group will subsidise a members' celebratory afternoon tea. The original plan was the combine this with our AGM - this may change but we certainly feel that 50 years and still going strong is a good reason to celebrate. Further details will be circulated when possible.

*Here is an appeal for when life does get back to normal
(and it will!)*

Group Treasurer - Are you good with figures ? (or can at least add up!). We need a Treasurer for 2020/21 - The Group really does need you !

Group membership:

It's the time of year for group membership renewal payment. All those paying by the end of April will be entered into a prize draw. If you pay by Standing Order you are already entered.

Appeal to our members, associates and friends:

Do you have design expertise - if so, we need your help with our Group's promotional materials. Can you help us? If so please get in touch with Martin, our Group Chairman.

Chairman's Chat



from Martin Goad

(Martin wrote this article before the world went into lockdown !!!)

Spring 2020

In December I wrote about the weather and driving. Well as I write this after storms Ciara and Dennis it is still wet and windy as it seems to have been for months. There is still standing water on the roads and I have been through two floods with my associate this morning. One extra hazard to look out for is the potholes under the water. Even though the season has been mild the roads seem to have deteriorated badly. Take care out there. To more cheerful matters, this is our 50th year as the Walsall Group and we are celebrating in a number of ways. The AGM WAS on May 17th preceded by an afternoon tea in celebration of our anniversary.

Thanks to Sandra, our newsletter editor, we will have features on the five decades that we have been around, it was the 70s last time and the 80s this time.

There are details of a 50 mile drive for you to try if you wish. One thing that we do need this year is to find more associates to join us. We have put a lot of effort into our observer team over the last couple of years both with recruitment and with training.

I really have to thank the observers for their work generally, but specifically for the way they turn up so regularly for the Sunday runs each month.

Often we only have a few associates for them to take out for drives. So if you can persuade anyone in your circle to think about the benefits of advanced driving and encourage them to sign up, that would be a great help.

Martin Goad, Chairman

50 MILE DRIVE (something to try when we are finally liberated)

This is a 50 mile drive that members might like to try to celebrate our 50th anniversary as a group. The drive is fun with lots of bends and keeps off the main roads as far as possible. It includes plenty of interesting places to visit including a city, Lichfield, two historic Mercian towns, Tamworth and Atherstone, a stately home, Middleton Hall, a water park, Kingsbury, a zoo, Twycross and the National Memorial Arboretum. You can even take a short diversion to Bosworth Battlefield. The route starts and finishes in Lichfield although as it is circular you could pick it up wherever is most convenient.



From Lichfield take the A5127 towards Sutton Coldfield over Wall Island through Shenstone to the Watford Gap Island where you turn left onto a minor road. Follow this road to the end under the M42 and A38 and turn left onto London Road then left again onto the A38 and go up to Bassetts Pole Island. At the roundabout take the second exit, A446, and turn left soon after onto a minor road to Middleton. In the village turn left by the church and follow down to the A4091. Middleton Hall is in front of you, but you turn right at the crossroads and take the next left off the A4091 towards Bodymoor Heath and Kingsbury Water Park. Continue across the A4097 past more lakes and after the railway line first left on a minor road down to the B4098. Right onto the B4098 and follow it to Furnace End, where left onto the B4116 towards Atherstone.

At Bentley you can follow the road ahead and go into the town or follow the B4116 over the A5 to Twycross and bypass Atherstone. Off to the right at Sheepy Magna you can take a diversion of a few miles to Bosworth Field. At Twycross left onto the A444, past Twycross Zoo, this can be busy at times, and up to the M42 junction where there is a service area. At the roundabout take the second exit onto the B5493 towards Seckington and Tamworth.

Through No Man`s Heath where four counties meet (almost!). As you enter the outskirts of Tamworth turn right onto the A513 towards Alrewas. This takes you to the National Memorial Arboretum and soon after to the A38 junction where you turn left towards Lichfield. Off the A38 onto the A5127 and into Lichfield.

The drive alone should take about an hour and a half, but there are so many places to stop and visit or get something to eat and drink that it could easily be a full day out. I hope you enjoy driving or riding it as much as I did when planning it. If you have a favourite drive of about 50 miles not too far from Walsall we would be pleased to feature it in a future 2020 newsletter.

Since the last newsletter....

WELL DONE & CONGRATULATIONS ON PASSING YOUR TEST TO

Darren Kirkham,

31st January with a First, Observer: David Prior, Senior Josie Hubbard-Palmer;

Amanda Featherstone,

23rd January, Observer, Mike Bentley/Josie; Senior Mike Bentley/Josie Hubbard-Palmer;

Robert Roalfe

Wednesday 26th February with a F1rst.

Observer, Martin Goad, Senior observer, Glynnis Jeavons.

Many congratulations to Robert who passed soon after he joined the group.

Also

Since the last newsletter – a warm welcome to our new Associates

**Stephen Manison
Robert Roalfe**

Observers Training Morning at RAF Shawbury

On Sunday 1st March a group of our Observers made their way to RAF Shawbury, Nr Shrewsbury, to join other observers from a wide area, for Human Factors Training. There were about 150 participants from car and motorcycle Groups. If you look at our Advanced Driver Course Book you will see 'Human Factors' as the first competency to be achieved.

We were welcomed by Wing Commander Harry Palmer who is the ASCENT Flight Training General Manager at the No 1 Flying Training School Land, Sea and Sky, and given a talk by Graham Longmuir, also of Ascent. Teaching people to fly helicopters, we were told, is a very difficult skill and Human Factors Training is essential for the safety of the crew.

How we work together and the recognition that people make mistakes; together with the understanding that you can't teach anybody anything only let them learn – underpins this training. We were told that driving, for most of us, is the most dangerous thing we do. Also that "Pink things" – us, human beings – were always the weak link. Situational Awareness was explained, where we use common sense based on experience. What – So What – Now What? Information on decision making, task saturation, fatigue and stress followed.

Steve Ellis Co-ordinator for IAM region 6 spoke to us about observing and the consideration of Human Factors. He stressed that our work with our associates is not about the test but about making people safer drivers.

Mike Bentley Associate Co-ordinator

**If you have the misfortune to be in a car crash, here
are a few words of advice from Emma Mitchell,
IAM RoadSmart senior digital communications executive**
If you are a driver then please familiarise yourself with the following
checklist to make sure you're prepared for the unexpected:



- * Stop the car
- * Switch off the engine and turn on the hazard lights
- * Check for any injuries to yourself or passengers. Call an ambulance if necessary
- * Call the police – 999 or 101 depending on the situation
- * Give your details to anyone else involved
- * Collect details from any other drivers, passengers or witnesses
- * Take photos of any damage – these could be used as evidence
- * Contact your recovery company
- * Contact your insurer

Review of Sheila Thomas talk - Vision

On Tuesday 25th February Sheila Thomas of the Dudley Road Safety and Travel Awareness team gave a brief presentation on how we perceive things out on the road and some things that it is easy to miss. Mike Bentley and Josie Hubbard-Palmer had seen Sheila give this talk to a group of mature drivers at Walsall Fire Station last year and been impressed so had asked her to come along to us.

Although the session was aimed at older drivers, and there were one or two in the audience, it was very relevant to remind all road users how easy it can be to miss vital information when scanning a scene. Sheila talked about some of the ways that eyesight changes during our life and how these can impact on our driving. She also showed a short video and a text document, asking us to observe what was there in each case.

It was surprising how easy it can be to miss obvious things when not expecting them or by being distracted by another factor. Sometimes our anticipation can take us in the wrong direction. It was most interesting and thought provoking.

Following Sheila's presentation we had a Motoring Brains Trust where members put questions to a panel of experts and lots of interesting discussions ensued.

A huge thank you to Sheila for her session and for being on the panel for the brains trust to give a road safety perspective. Thanks also to our other panellists, Trevor Poxon, our president and former IAM examiner, Graham Sharrard, recently retired police officer and Francis Gale, a member who trained ambulance drivers before he retired. Thank you to the 25 members who attended and helped to make the event a success.

Review of meal at college - February

Well, dear Reader, I am trying hard to think of words to describe our meal at Walsall College, apart from 'yum, yum, yum' !!! Utterly delicious.

Five course of taste-bud deliciousness. I would well recommend a visit to Walsall College Restaurant, I will certainly be going back, if only to try their chips - Chris Rice ordered chips with his steak, oooh I have never seen such chips, which were closely guarded by Chris !

A huge thank you to Alison Kimberley for organising our visit. (Editor Sandie)

Dear Reader - no excuses that you haven't got the time !!!



*Take care of your car in the garage,
and the car will take care of you on the
road."*

Amit Kalantri

**The Group was founded in the 1970s.
However - We explored the 70's in the last edition -
so, dear Reader, what do you remember about the 1980's ???**



Cars

The most popular cars of the 1980s

Ford Escort. Ford launched the Escort in 1968 as a replacement for the ancient Anglia. ...

Ford Fiesta. Ford's first supermini was launched in 1976

Austin/MG Metro. ...

Ford Sierra. ...

Vauxhall Astra. ...

Ford Cortina. ...

Ford Orion. ...

Vauxhall Nova.

The **1980s** was marked by more traditional colours, with black and bright red being the most favoured colours of the period

What was a pound worth in 1980?

£1 in **1980** is equivalent in purchasing power to about £4.32 in 2020, a difference of £3.32 over 40 years. The **1980** inflation rate = 17.99%. The current inflation rate (2019 to 2020) is 1.50%

Top '80s songs (do you remember them or admit you do ???)i

I Wanna Dance with Somebody" by Whitney Houston. ...

Take On Me" by A-ha. ... ; Don't Stop Believin'" by Journey. ...

Modern Love" by David Bowie. .; Beat It" by Michael Jackson. ...

When Doves Cry" by Prince. ... ; Into the Groove" by Madonna. ... ;

Blue Monday" by New Order.

The Biggest Stars of the 1980s

Clint Eastwood. Actor | Million Dollar Baby. ... ; Eddie Murphy. Actor | The Nutty Professor. ...

Burt Reynolds. Actor | Boogie Nights. ... ; Tom Cruise. Actor | Top Gun. ...

Sylvester Stallone. Actor | Rocky. ... ; Harrison Ford. Actor

Paul Hogan. Actor | 'Crocodile' Dundee. ; Michael J. Fox. ...

Fashion - Ladies do you remember this ???

Among women large hair-dos and puffed-up styles typified the decade. Hair in the 1980s was typically big, curly, bouffant and heavily styled. Television shows such as *Dynasty* helped popularise the high volume bouffant and glamorous image associated with it.

The **1980s fashion** placed heavy emphasis on expensive clothes and fashion accessories. Apparel tended to be very bright and vivid in appearance. Women expressed an image of wealth and success through shiny costume jewelry, such as large faux-gold earrings, pearl necklaces, and clothing covered with sequins and diamonds.

The short, tight spandex mini skirts were a popular fashion item for young women in the second half of the 1980s. Punk fashion began as a reaction against both the hippie movement of the past decades and the materialist values of the current decade.

Women from the 1980s wore bright, heavy makeup. Everyday fashion in the 1980s consisted of light-colored lips, dark and thick eyelashes, and pink or red rouge. Some of the top fashion models of the 1980s were Brooke Shields, Christie Brinkley, Gia Carangi, Yasmin Le Bon, Renée Simonsen, Kelly Emborg (all probably someone's Grandma by now !!!)

Fashion – Gentlemen, what do you remember ???

Popular preppy clothing for men included Oxford shirts, sweaters, turtlenecks, polo shirts with popped collars, khaki slacks, argyle socks, dress pants, Hush Puppies Oxford shoes, brogues, suspenders, seersucker or striped linen suits, corduroy, and cable knit sweaters that were often worn tied around the shoulders.

Well dear Reader, has this dredged up a few memories for you.

Some welcome, some not so !!! Some thoughts of 'did we really do that'



*How does the number plate system work?
Here's everything you need to know*

2020 number plates arrive in March, but what should you be looking for? We explain how number plates show what year your car is, where your car is from, and how to get a personalised plate.

How does the 2020 number plate system work?

The current number plate system has been in place for a few years. If we take the plate AT65 TDR as an example, we can show you how it works:

1. The first two letters represent the 'local memory tag', which is where the vehicle was registered. Each place has a selection of letters to identify it. For example, LA to LY cover London, and MA — MY covers Manchester and Merseyside.
2. The third and fourth digits are numbers known as the 'age identifier'. These are changed every six months in March and September. The easiest way to remember this is to think of March as the year, and September as the year plus 50. For example:

So, if a car has a '17' plate, it was registered between the beginning of March and the end of August in 2017, and a '67'-plate car was registered between September 2017 and the end of February 2018.

3. The last three letters are randomly chosen and allocated to a dealership when the car is registered. However, bear in mind some personalised plates don't follow this system.

Is it worth waiting until March or September to buy a new car?

If you want to buy a new car with the latest number plate, then arrange to wait until March or September for your new car to be registered and delivered to you when you visit the dealer. If you're not fussed about the latest plate, you might be able to get a bargain by buying sooner. Dealers sometimes get rid of old stock at discounted prices in February and August each year.

What was the old number plate system?

If you're looking at or older second hand cars, you may see number plates following this style: A 470 TDR. This is the old format, which was phased out in 2001 and changed to the twice-yearly one we mentioned above. If you come across one of the older plates, then this is how it works:

1. The first letter is the 'age identifier', representing the year the car was registered. This originally changed each year in August, but from 1999 it was updated every six months instead.
2. The three digits are random numbers.
3. Two of the final three letters indicate the area of registration, while the other is random. From 1963 to 1983, the letter identifying the year of the car was at the end of the plate, and the original once-a-year plate change system operated until 1999. As a result, dealers would see a huge increase in car sales in August each year from drivers who wanted to be seen in the newest cars, which led to lower sales during the rest of the year.

The DVLA says the format will be reviewed and updated again in 2050, so you've got a while before you have to worry about that. Knowing a car's age can help you work out how much you are going to have to pay on it. It can also give you an idea of what to expect in terms of the car's technology and capability.

Using new number plates to find a car's age

You can find a car's age using the third and fourth digits of the new number plates. They will either be the last two digits of the release year (17 for cars released March 2017, for example) or the last two digits plus 50 for cars released in September (67 for cars released in September 2017).

Using old number plates to find a car's age

Cars released in the old system used letters — from A to Z. If it's confusing then don't worry, here's the full list of number plate years and their age identifier for used cars.

Simply look for the letter or number, and it'll show you the year it was released. If you want to , then the 20-plate will be released on 1 March 2020. This will apply to any new vehicle registered from 1 March until 31 August 2020. From 1 September 2020, the number plate will change to a 70-plate, and that will apply to all new vehicles registered until February 29 2021.

Does a number plate change affect personalised plates?

Number plate changes can have an impact on a personalised number plate's age identifier. The age identifier (the third and fourth digits) on the plate must be on a vehicle of equal age or newer. For example, if your personalised plate starts with XX05, then the car will have to have been registered in March 2005 or after.



IAM RoadSmart urges drivers and riders to undertake vehicle maintenance checks

Dear Reader: now is the chance for you to undertake the basic maintenance that, of course, you haven't been putting off !!!

Today the Department for Transport (DfT) has announced that due to the lockdown vehicle owners will be granted a 6-month exemption from MOT testing, allowing them to continue to travel on essential journeys while minimising the need for social contact with garage and testing centre employees.

From 30 March onwards, all cars, vans and motorcycles which would require an MOT will be exempted from needing a test for 6 months. However, the DfT has stressed that vehicles must still be kept in a roadworthy condition during this period, and garages will remain open for repair work where essential. Richard Gladman, Head of Driving and Riding Standards at IAM RoadSmart, has these useful tips on how to help ensure your vehicle remains in good condition for any essential journeys by carrying out these simple safety checks:

Tyres

There's no denying that your car and bike's tyres are extremely important, so you must inspect them frequently for cuts and bulges - and remember to include the tread depth. The minimum tread depth on a car is 1.6mm and you can test this using the '20p test.' Simply put a 20p coin into the tyre groove and see if the outer band of the coin is still visible or not. If it isn't, your tyre is above the legal limit, and if it is, your tyre needs replacing. Motorcycle tyres must have a minimum of 1mm, in both cases this must be across the central $\frac{3}{4}$ of the tyre. Remember to check the tyre pressures as well, preferably when cold.

Oil

Checking your engine oil levels is quick and easy with many new cars now having a self-checking system in place. If you have to do it the traditional way then make sure your engine is switched off and cool. You can check you have the right amount of oil by using the dipstick or on some motorcycles a sight glass in the side of the engine casing. Remember to keep the bike vertical when checking this by getting someone to sit on the bike whilst you check the oil. Bear in mind that overfilling will also cause damage, so top up slowly and check the level regularly.

Lights

Making sure your car or bike lights are in good working order is essential. When it comes to checking them, you should make sure that your headlights, indicators, reversing lights, fog light and brake lights all work properly. This check is simple, but you may find it easier to ask someone to help you. Alternatively, you could park near a window or garage door and use the reflection to see if your lights are fully operational.

Water and screen wash

Almost as bad as running out of oil is running low on water - also known as engine coolant. This can usually be checked visually by looking at the side of the coolant reservoir. If the level is low or your temperature gauge shows the engine is running hotter than usual you may need to check the levels, but ideally this should be done by a professional as the systems are under pressure and can be very hot. If you do have to top up, remember to carefully follow the information in your manual.

Filling up the screen wash is quick and easy and it could save your life. Being able to see ahead of you is one of the most important aspects of driving. The earlier you can spot a hazard, the more chance you have to react to it safely and appropriately. Don't ignore that reminder displayed on your dashboard.

The break in MOT testing must not be seen as an excuse to neglect your regular maintenance. If there is an issue with your vehicle, get it fixed. Garages remain open for essential repairs, although they will be working under restrictions. You do not want to be stranded at the side of the road, or worse involved in a collision, because you took a chance.

The police may also be more active in stopping vehicles during this period to check on the purpose of your journey. If they pick up on any obvious faults, it's likely they will choose to issue a fine or even seize your vehicle. Regular checks will help you stay safe, avoid being stranded and allow your essential travel to take place.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: "We must ensure those on the frontline of helping the nation combat COVID19 are able to do so. Allowing this temporary exemption from vehicle testing will enable vital services such as deliveries to continue, frontline workers to get to work, and people to get essential food and medicine. Safety is key, which is why garages will remain open for essential repair work."

And finally.....

Five Ups of life

Buckle up, Start up, Keep it up, Don't give up, Cheer up.

Vikrmn

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