

October 2021

Newsletter

Hello dear reader

Sorry folks, it’s been quite some time since the last newsletter, it was 2020!!! In fact, I think we can safely say that the whole of 2020 and most of 2021 has been more than somewhat mislaid!!! However, the Group committee is now meeting and planning for next year, especially the forthcoming Annual General Meeting

Sunday November 7th 9.30am to 11.30am Sunday meeting and on road training

 11.30am to 12.30pm AGM

 1pm Sunday Carvery Lunch Calderfields. Everyone welcome

**Annual General Meeting**

Walsall Group of Advanced Motorists

**Sunday 7th November 2021,** at 11.30am in Aldridge Community Centre

Attached are the official papers – Notice of the AGM and nomination form for committee membership. Also attached is the AGM agenda. If you feel you can contribute and wish to join the committee that would be great, we need your fresh ideas, however if you wish to nominate someone else for the 2022 committee, please remember to ask them first, it will save a bit of a shock!

After the AGM we are having lunch at nearby Calderfields Golf Club, where they have a very good Sunday Carvery. The cost is approximately £13 for the carvery. If you are interested then please contact Martin Goad by 31st October preferably by email.

 **Mike Bentley Obituary**

As you may be aware we sadly lost one of our valued committee members in the Spring. Mike Bentley. Mike had been an active member of the Walsall group for many years and held the positions of Chairman, Vice Chair, Associate Coordinator and Chief Observer. He was also a National Observer.

He truly embodied the IAM ethos to improve road safety by helping drivers to increase their knowledge, skills and confidence on the road.  The many Associates he guided to become advanced drivers will know that, as their Observer, he did this with kindness, support and encouragement. On a personal note, Mike will also be remembered for his wonderful dry, witty sense of humour. We were truly privileged to have Mike as a member of our group and he will be sorely missed by all on the committee and those he supported over the years.

**Well Done….**

Huge congratulations to Harry Llewellyn who passed his long-awaited Advanced Driving test on September 12th. It was originally scheduled two weeks into the first lockdown and had to be cancelled

He had the benefit of two Observers through his journey, Glynnis Jeavons and Brian Clarke. His Senior Observer was Josie Hubbard-Palmer and Examiner Mark Weaver.

**New Trainee Observers required**

We are actively looking to recruit a few new trainee Observers to join the Observer Training Team. If you feel this is something you would like to get involved in, please let Josie know and we can have a chat about what is involved. Observing is an excellent way to keep your own Advanced skills at a high level whilst helping others to improve theirs.

**Membership fees**

There are still a handful of members who have not yet paid their subs to the Walsall Group for April 2021 – March 2022. If you are one of these? Please can you pay asap. Thanks in advance.

Taken from IAM Tips

 **The true impact of COVID on our roads (and us)**

The COVID-19 pandemic has been akin to a car crash for the UK’s health and economy. However collateral damage caused by the virus has also impacted other areas of people’s lives, including when it comes to getting behind the wheel. Here are hints and tips on how we can come out the other side of the tunnel.

**Anxious about returning to the roads?**

As many people embraced home working and online deliveries, many cars were left to languish on driveways and in garages. However, since social gatherings, offices, and schools have been the given the green light to return to normal, the nation’s roads are almost as busy as they were pre-lockdown. Living in times of heightened anxiety and a deterioration of driving skills having not driven for a long period of time, has left many reluctant to get back in the driver’s seat. We recommend rebuilding confidence by undertaking short journeys on familiar roads, and then gradually increasing the distance of journeys.  Your Group is available to improve your skills and confidence.

**MOT tests delayed**

Due to the national lockdown, cars, motorcycles, and vans were given a six-month extension to acquire their MOT certificate, resulting in a backlog of millions of tests scheduled for the next month.

While most cars have now passed the six-month extension some motorists may be unaware of when their vehicle’s MOT is due and for those who took advantage of exemptions and extensions last year might struggle to satisfy this year’s test. If your vehicle is driving around without a valid MOT, it could mean it is not safe for the road and could result in a £1,000 fine. That's why we urge road users to check their vehicle’s MOT status online as soon as possible and get their MOT booked if needed to avoid leaving ‘safety to chance’.

**Lack of use during lockdown**

Vehicle checks shouldn’t just be left to an annual MOT test. Maintenance checks are something car owners should be doing weekly. But during the last 18 months of irregular usage, many vehicles have not received the attention they need. For example, tyres may not have done as many miles of the last year and a half but that doesn’t mean they don’t have to be maintained. Tyres will deflate and deteriorate over time, even when a vehicle is just sat in a garage or driveway. As a result, we remind all vehicle owners to check their tyres are properly inflated at the right level of pressure, as well as check for any cracks or signs of damage on the sidewalls. Of course, checks should also be carried out on other parts of your vehicle.

**Deterioration in skills and roadcraft**

UK drivers believe that lockdown has had a detrimental impact on their driving habits, and that they are sure they would fail their driving test if they had to take it again today. A study has found that 29% of UK drivers said they are anxious about motorway driving, 22% admitted they steer one-handed, 12% confessed they easily get distracted, while 15% stated they drive far too quickly. While it was inevitable that lockdown would result in rusty skills and confidence issues due to a break from the roads, refresh your skills and knowledge with your Group, ensuring our roads are kept as safe as possible.

**Sandies Stories**

I would love to hear from you with your experiences of driving (or lack of it) during Covid.

To start, here’s my recollections / confessions:

I volunteer at a National Trust property, partly looking after livestock, so fortunately was allowed to volunteer. During lockdown, it was enjoyable driving on the M6, no heavy traffic. However, the day lockdown was eased and back to normal - the M6 went back to normal and it was a case of one day quiet the next day ‘where did this lot come from?’

Otherwise during lock-down my driving experience consisted of driving between Aldi (in Moxley), Morrisons and my allotment, Sutton Road! My motoring world had drastically shrunk but I didn’t realise quite how much it had shrunk!

Recently when I had to drive to the other side of Birmingham. I got onto the M6 at Great Barr, then very quickly realised I hadn’t driven to Birmingham for about 2 years - scary ! Obviously, I did the journey but it certainly made me realise how much my motoring world had changed.

Previously, before lockdown, I would have thought nothing of popping in my car and going here, there and absolutely everywhere! One thing I have noticed in other people’s driving - has everyone forgotten where the indicators are on their vehicles ? and the general disregard for the speed limits - or was it like this before and I have conveniently forgotten ?

Let me have your experiences, even just to make me feel that it’s not me being totally silly!

**Editor Sandie**

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| **New petrol grade that arrived this summer**The standard or ‘Premium’ petrol grade in the UK will become E10 as early as this summer.If your vehicle or equipment is not compatible with E10 fuel, you will still be able to use E5 by purchasing the ‘Super’ grade petrol from most filling stations. Filling stations will clearly label petrol as either E10 or E5; diesel fuel will not be changing. |

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| The new fuel uses a higher mix of renewable ethanol than the old E5 petrol in order to reduce greenhouse emissions, but is known to pose a risk of damage to older cars.  E10 petrol is unleaded containing up to 10 percent bioethanol, taken from renewable sources such as sugar beet.   It should reduce petrol prices, but will end up costing drivers more as its lower energy content means cars will be less efficient.  Overall fuel costs for petrol cars are estimated to increase by 1.6 percent as a result of moving from E5 to E10. Check the manual or ask the manufacturer or dealer before using E10. If your car was built in 2011 or later it is E10 compatible.  Most cars built since 2000 are also E10 compatible but if in doubt, you can check your car and engine. Some other petrol-powered equipment may not be compatible with E10 petrol, such as:* Boats
* Petrol-powered garden equipment or machinery, such as lawnmowers and chainsaws
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 Thanks to Glynnis Jeavons for this information

Issued September 2021 **Highway Code update**

Highways England has drafted updated guidance for The Highway Code with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) to help road users better understand how motorways and high-speed roads operate. More than 3,200 people and organisations responded to a consultation on the guidance, with their comments directly leading to it being amended and improved. The amendments are expected to become part of The Highway Code later this year.

The update will include:

* clearer advice on where to stop in an emergency
* the importance of not driving in a lane closed by a Red X
* the use of variable speed limits to manage congestion
* updated guidance on key factors that contribute to safety-related incidents, including driving while tired, unroadworthy vehicles, safe towing, tailgating and driving in roadworks

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**Group President: Trevor Poxon MBE**

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