



iAM
RoadSmart

FORWARD

Issue 15



The Newsletter for
Somerset & Wiltshire
Advanced Motorists

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FORWARD

Newsletter of Somerset & Wiltshire Advanced Motorists

www.swam-iam.org.uk

Registered Charity No 1050592

November 2023 — January 2024

Issue 15

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Forthcoming Events

Our next event is on Thursday, November 23 at 19.00. It will take the form of a Q&A session and will be on Zoom. Two of our most experienced members, Martyn Buckland, IAM Examiner, and David Major, Chief Observer, will be answering your questions on any matters relating to driving. If you want to submit your questions before the meeting, please send them to David at chiefobserver@swam-iam.org.uk, or you can ask them at the meeting. We hope to see you there.

There will be no meeting in December, but there will be a meeting on January 16 at Beckington Memorial Hall which will be a Night Driving 3-in-a-car event, preceded by a short talk.

For more information, see page 14, and for more information about Night Driving, see page 16.

Welcome to this edition of *Forward*. We have had a successful summer attending the Bath Festival of Motoring and the Westbury White Horse Classic and Vintage Vehicle Show, a report on which is on page 10. As a result, we have had a greater number of Associates joining the group this year compared to previous years, and we intend to continue with attending similar events next year. Thanks are due to all those who helped at these events. Without our volunteers giving up their weekends to attend, we would not be able spread the word about advanced driving in this way.

Last time we introduced a new feature of reproducing some of IAM RoadSmart's posters in the newsletter, and we are continuing this with two posters, and an article, about driving at night; see page 16. This is something which many of us may feel less confident about as we get older, and we are planning to hold a 3-in-a-car event at Beckington Memorial Hall in January (or possibly February if the weather prevents us holding it in January), to practise night driving. This is a good opportunity to practise or, if you don't want to drive yourself, to be a passenger while somebody else drives, to learn more about how to be safe driving at night. We had an interesting meeting in September with our President, Helen Schofield (report on page 5), talking about driving an electric car. The talk was informative and interesting and there was debate afterwards about the pros and cons of electric vehicles. Some members of the audience owned, or had driven, an electric car themselves, and were able to contribute their own experiences.

Clare Hogg, Sue Phillips

The next edition of *Forward* will be published in February 2024. Please submit motoring-related articles and/or digital photographs to the Editors (*who reserve the right to edit them*) by Friday 5 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 a 3-in-a-car event on slow manoeuvring. The meeting started with David Major reminding Observers that all Local Observers must requalify as National Observers before April 2025 or they will cease to be Observers.

Peter Huntington then spoke about slow manoeuvring, and mentioned that most common accidents occur at less than 5 mph. He stressed the importance of conducting manoeuvres, such as turning in the road, reversing round a corner, and parallel parking, at a very slow speed. It is hard to see all round, especially low objects, and you have to stop as soon as you are aware of having touched something. Stop immediately, and then work out what to do. Peter now drives much more slowly when manoeuvring than before. You need very good clutch control in a manual car. In an automatic, use the brake and the accelerator at the same time. Ideally you should be aiming to manoeuvre to the nearest centimetre. He said that supermarket car parks are especially difficult, and that parking spaces in general do not cater for the increased width of cars in recent years.



Parallel parking
Photo courtesy of dmv.dc.gov

Observers then went to the three sites for parallel parking, turning in the road, and reversing round a corner. Those wanting to practise were divided up between the sites and then moved between them so that they could all practise each manoeuvre. Afterwards members returned to the

hall and discussed how the evening had gone, and it was regarded as a useful exercise.

Our speaker at the September meeting was our President, Helen Schofield, who told us about her experiences driving an electric car. She started by telling us that she had taken her IAM test in 1971 before there were even groups. She took it because she wanted to be

able to drive her father's car without covering up the IAM badge on it, and not for road safety reasons. However, working as a nurse in A&E turned her membership of the IAM into a road safety issue. Having lived in Portugal for a while, where driving standards were poor, she realised on her return to the UK that she needed to refresh her advanced driving. She retook the IAM test and went on to become an Observer, then Chief Observer, with the Bath group, before becoming Regional Co-ordinator for the South West.

When the Fellowship scheme was introduced, she decided to take that test to maintain her standards and she is now retested every three years. She encouraged all members to do the same unless they were Observers, who are retested regularly anyway, in order to maintain their advanced driving standards.

Helen then went on to talk about electric cars and some of their pros and cons. She has recently bought a new, fully electric car, a VW ID, as her previous car was old and wouldn't comply with Bristol's clean air zone, or Bath's if that was extended to private cars. She thought carefully about it, and the fact that she was moving to a new house which has solar panels and could have its own charging point helped to make her decision.

The big plus of driving an electric car is that there are no emissions when it is being driven. She does most of her driving around town at slow speeds, so when she is in traffic she is not adding to the pollution in town.

She went on to talk about Driver Assist, which is not limited to electric cars, but is common in most new cars. Some features of Driver Assist can be a problem but they can be switched off. For example, lane control, which keeps you in your lane unless you indicate, can be a problem when overtaking a cyclist, or changing lanes on a motorway, as you have to indicate even when there is no other reason to do so.

Her car applies the brakes if you get too close to the car in front, which could be a problem when getting into position to overtake.

With a lot of Driver Assist features, the car is doing the driving. She

wondered if it is necessary to switch these things off for taking the test. She will be retaking her Fellowship test very soon and will ask the examiner. One member, who had recently taken his test in an electric car, said that it had not been a problem at all for him.

Driving is much easier in a fully electric car even than in an automatic as there are only two pedals, brake and accelerator, and no gear changes. Because it starts silently, at a slow speed other road users, e.g. pedestrians, are not aware of her, so she has to be very careful. Although there was talk of electric cars having to make some noise at slow speeds, this has not actually happened yet.

For a hill start, you press the brake hard and it holds the car completely until you press the accelerator to continue. The accelerator is very sensitive, so you need to keep your foot well away from it when the brake is on, or it will start. This can be a bit of an issue and takes practice. Acceleration itself is awesome, and you can accelerate away very quickly and smoothly as you don't have to change up through the gears. This makes an electric car great for overtaking, but again, controlling the accelerator takes practice.

The car welcomes her as she gets in and speaks at various times while she is driving, and Helen can also ask it to turn the radio on to a station of her choice.

Helen then went on to discuss the thorny issue of charging electric cars. She has her own charger and has only had to use public chargers on two long journeys, one to Devon and one to Scotland. On average, her car can do 240 miles on one charge, and it tells her how many miles she has left. She also has an app which tells her where there are charging points. She didn't have any problems with there being vacant chargers when needed, so the infrastructure is improving. The car learns her style of driving and when it learnt that she mostly drove short distances at slow speeds, the mileage she could do on one charge went up. On longer journeys, at higher speeds, the car uses more power, so electric car drivers tend not to speed as they are preserving their batteries.

One thing you need to have if you have an electric car is a smartphone. She has one to unlock her charger at home (so that strangers can't use it), and she has an app, Zapmap, to plan her journey, with a map showing her where the nearest chargers are, and how long the wait is for them. To charge her car from 30% to 100% would cost about £10.

She addressed the issue of concerns about chargers. She said that if you plan, then it is all right. A problem can arise if you might have an emergency as you can't charge in a hurry, the way you can fill up quickly at a petrol station. She advises always having sufficient charge for you to be able to make any journey you think you might have to as an emergency.

The cost of using public chargers varies depending on where they are situated and who runs them. On motorways, it is free to lock on and the rates are reasonable. In supermarkets, it is free to lock on but the rate rises dramatically after a set time. This is to prevent drivers leaving the car there too long and blocking other drivers from using it. This applies, too, to the chargers at Charlotte Street car park.

On her long journeys she had no problems with there being a charger free when she wanted it; she used two going to Devon and six going to Scotland. She thinks there might be more of an issue on cross-country journeys. For her, because she has solar panels, it is free to charge at home, but you do have to consider if it is worth the investment. One plus is that servicing charges are very low.

She also said that having a hybrid car is great in towns, when it is running as an electric car, but if you are driving long distances, it is a heavy petrol or diesel car, and fuel consumption is not good. So whether or not a hybrid is suitable for you, depends on the type of driving you are doing.

She concluded by saying that it was a joy to drive, and fun to drive on the open road, but she turned Driver Assist off.

Helen then answered questions from the audience. One member asked if using windscreen wipers, for example, drained the battery, but she said no, because there is a different battery system for

ancillary items.

There have been reports of fires in electric vehicles (EVs), but Helen pointed out that petrol and diesel cars go up in flames too. The problem is that many EVs are adaptations of internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles and were not designed from scratch as EVs and sometimes they do not work so well. Her VW was designed as an EV, as Teslas are, and they work much better and are much safer. The car in itself is a lethal weapon – hence her belief in the IAM.

Her car has self-parking, but she hasn't used it yet. Driving in Bath one day, the car spoke to her and said it was looking for somewhere to park, so it had slowed down. This was a bit unnerving, and she thinks she must have touched something accidentally to set that off.

One member said that he had driven a Tesla and had tried out auto-mode, but it is not really switched on in the UK and didn't work well; e.g. at traffic lights with a green filter it stopped because the other light was red.

There was mention of regenerative braking which means that there is no need to brake so much, as taking the foot off the accelerator automatically slows the car and recharges the battery at the same time.

Helen's VW has distance control which allows you to drive closer to the car in front when driving at a slower speed. You can use the accelerator to override it. It is intelligent to help you, not to take over from you.

You do have to be careful driving a car with so many Driver Assist features. Some drivers become too comfortable in their seats and relax too much, and forget that they are still in charge of the vehicle.

Helen's car tells her to take a break after two hours. Because of needing to recharge, EVs force drivers to take a break, which is good for safety.

There was then a discussion about phasing out ICE cars. Being able to have a charger at home is critical for electric car owners. Having a sufficient electricity supply for all the new EVs coming into use is vital, and to help this Helen said that we should be having solar panels on all new build housing and on all industrial buildings. If the electricity

being used to charge your electric car is not renewable energy, then you are just moving the pollution from one place to another. A lot of work is needed to improve the infrastructure, and to increase the proportion of renewable energy.

There was a discussion about the environmental costs of EVs. The most green thing you can do is actually to keep your existing car, so long as it is well maintained and so not polluting more than necessary.

Most of the emissions are in the manufacture and scrapping of an electric car, but it is important to consider where the emissions are made. They are not in the cities where they are being driven and so the environmental benefit of reducing pollution in cities is still valid.

The question of lithium batteries was raised, not only in their manufacture, which is very environmentally unfriendly, but also in their disposal. However, batteries last a very long time, much longer than people think, and there are ways of continuing to use them for other purposes when they are no longer powerful enough for a car.

Because of the extra weight of an electric car, there is more wear and pollution from the tyres. However, they are improving.

Manufacturers are looking at alternatives to EVs such as hydrogen cars. EVs will not be for everybody, partly because of the inability to charge at home.

Helen finished by again recommending everyone to consider becoming a Fellow of IAM RoadSmart to keep up their driving standards.

Westbury White Horse Classic and Vintage Vehicle Show

The first hot sunny day in weeks brought Somerset and Wiltshire Advanced Motorists to their last outdoor event of the year.

Our gazebo was visible from afar and manned by our dedicated volunteers, namely Dave Edwards, John Cameron, Michael Muncer, Paul Pywell, Peter Huntington, Clare Hogg, Sue Phillips and Rosemary Tandy. Special thanks go to Dave for organising our stand.

We had a very good site, next to police vehicles which included a crashed car positioned right next to us. The crashed car was a VW Golf in which a young man had died owing to misjudging the road.



The sight of the wreck of the car and the poster telling what had happened made for very sobering reading and served as a timely reminder to visitors who wanted to improve their driving.

Next to the police vehicles were the Blood Bikes and Paul Pywell shared his time between the two stands. We had a number of enquiries about the motorbike advanced test so we passed them on to the Blood Bikes stand, which had information about WaBaM, and they did the same for us, showing good co-operation.

There was some interest from other stall holders before the opening at 10.00 and a good number of the visiting public up until lunchtime when numbers began to dwindle, perhaps because of the heat. We held our Highway Code quiz again with a slightly higher success rate this time – perhaps people are beginning to read their Highway Codes! We had ten all correct answers out of 54 entries, compared with 12 out of over 100 at the Bath Festival of Motoring. We had tables and chairs, so visitors were able to sit down while doing the quiz and could chat to the SWAM volunteers. Others were happy to talk about their driving and find out the benefits of Advanced Driving. It was an interesting and enjoyable day, with lots of stalls selling a variety of goods and refreshments, and with a large number of vintage cars and motorcycles to view. We have every intention of returning next year.





Welcome and Congratulations

We Welcome New Associates

Martin Brown

[*Observer:* Mark Ellis]

Sandra Coles

[*Observer:* Ray Robbetts]

Neil Condick

[*Observer:* John Morley]

Emily Cooper

[*Observer:* Paul Pywell]

Katarina Gomborova

[*Observer:* Callum Chamberlain]

Katherine Groves

[*Observer:* David Moreman]

Deirdre Hunt

[*Observer:* Nick Elton]

Timothy Jenkins

[*Observer:* Dave Edwards]

Orion Rodrigues

[*Observer:* John Morley]

David Vincent

[*Observer:* Paul Pywell]

We Congratulate

IAMRS Test Pass

Robert Galvin*	observed by Robin Clark
Les Greaves*	observed by Michael Muncer
Tom Humphreys*	observed by John Morley
Pete Morgan*	observed by Rob Norburn
Peter Rusbridger	observed by Ray Robbetts
Simon Tate*	observed by David Major
Christopher Tubey	observed by Dave Edwards
Marc Young	observed by Jeff Vincent

*FIRST pass

IMI National Observer Programme

Michael Muncer	mentored by Ray Robbetts
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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 news-

letters/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, X (formerly 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, X (formerly 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 IAMRS membership number.

Forthcoming Events Programme

Thursday, November 23 at 19.00: Q&A meeting on Zoom. Two of our most experienced members, Martyn Buckland, IAM Examiner, and David Major, Chief Observer, will be answering your questions on any matters relating to driving. If you want to submit your questions before the meeting, please send them to David at chiefobserver@swam-iam.org.uk, or you can ask them at the meeting. We hope to see you there.

December: no meeting

Tuesday, January 16 2024 at 19.00: 3-in-a-car meeting on Night Driving at Beckington Memorial Hall*. There will be a short talk first on the

topic from Dave Edwards, a very experienced National Observer with SWAM, and then an opportunity to go out on the road to practise driving at night with support from an Observer. 3-in-a-car events are an excellent opportunity to maintain advanced driving skills.

If the weather is too bad in January, the meeting will be postponed until February and a new date will be arranged.

Thursday, March 21 2024 at 19.00 for 19.30: SWAM AGM at Beckington Memorial Hall*. Following the formal business of the AGM, the speaker will be Mac McGarry, an IAM Examiner, and an entertaining speaker. His topic will be 'The most dangerous roads - how to negotiate them skilfully'.

Events later in 2024 are yet to be arranged but we expect them to include the following:

April: Observer Training Session

May: 3-in-a-car event at Beckington Memorial Hall*

June: A meeting at Beckington Memorial Hall* with a speaker

July: 3-in-a-car event at Beckington Memorial Hall*

**The address of the Hall is Beckington Memorial Hall, Bath Road, Beckington, Frome, BA11 6SH (just off the A36).*

Membership fees and Gift Aid

Membership Fees

The annual membership fee for SWAM is £12, or £15 for two members at the same address, due at the beginning of January. If you pay by Standing Order, you don't have to do anything. If you pay by BACS or cheque you will need to pay in January and if we do not receive your payment by the middle of the month, Peter Huntington (Membership Secretary) will send you a reminder.

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.

Many of you have sent us forms and we are very grateful for that. If you are a new member and haven't returned a form but are able to sign up to Gift Aid, please ask Clare Hogg (Treasurer) for the form. It is also necessary to remind members that if for any reason they are not able to claim Gift Aid after having signed a form, they **must** tell the Treasurer. The form which you have signed permits the claiming of Gift Aid until you notify the Treasurer otherwise. This can often happen when members change jobs or retire. It can be a permanent or temporary change, depending on circumstances, but it is your responsibility to tell us so that we can make the necessary change to our records. If you are unsure if you have sent us a form, please contact Clare. Contact details are on page 2.

Driving at Night

Following our reproduction of IAM RoadSmart posters about Alcohol and Driving in the last issue of *Forward*, we are printing a couple of posters about Night Driving, and this article gives some of IAMRS's tips about driving in the dark.

Use your lights appropriately:

Never worry about being the first person to put your lights on! Being visible and being able to see is key. Checking your lights are in full working order should become part of your routine vehicle checks. Knowing how to use your lights correctly is important to your safety and the safety of others. If visibility is reducing, check the light switch; a modern car with illuminated dash and daylight running lights can appear to have the lights on when they are not. Daylight running lights are only at the front, and do not illuminate the rear lights.

Remember you can dip your interior mirror if the lights from the vehicle

Night Driving Tips



Check all lights work
*before setting off on
your journey*

Watch for pedestrians
*who might be hard to
spot in the dark*



Reduce light inside
*your vehicle to
minimise distractions*

Get your eyes checked
*for issues that might
affect your night vision*



Keep windows clean
*to avoid glare and
condensation*

Use your headlights
*in early twilight after
the sun rises*



**DON'T
DAZZLE
OTHERS**



Dip your lights
when approaching
or following
another vehicle.
You should adjust
your lights if
they're too high.

behind are too bright for you. You also need to consider how and when you use your main beam, and make sure you dip your headlights when traffic is approaching or you are behind another vehicle. If you get blinded by someone coming in the opposite direction, try

focusing on the left-hand edge and pull over and stop, if necessary, until your eyes recover.

Keep windows and mirrors clean:

Ensure the vehicle's windscreen, windows and mirrors are clean and clear inside and out. Whilst a dirty windscreen may not be noticeable during the day, at night this can impair visibility and increase the glare from oncoming vehicles.

Take regular breaks:

We know from research that 37% of respondents have continued to drive whilst over-tired. We all know the tell-tale signs and how important it is we take notice of these and stop and take a break from driving every 100 miles or every 2 hours, whichever is sooner. Driving when tired slows your reaction time and puts you, your passengers and other road users in danger. Don't set out on a journey if you are tired and where possible avoid driving when you are normally asleep.

Increase the distance between cars:

Keeping a safe distance between you and the vehicle in front is important at any time of day. Remember in wet weather the Highway Code suggests we double the two second rule to allow at least four seconds in bad weather, and up to 10 seconds in snow and icy conditions. Night-time driving has many different hazards due to lack of clear vision – always drive at a speed that allows you to stop in the distance you can see to be clear.

Rebecca Ashton, Head of Policy and Research at IAM RoadSmart has this to say:

'Driving in the dark shouldn't be something to be nervous about but can take a little adjusting to if it's something you have not done for a while. Making sure your seat position is set up correctly can sometimes help; adjusting your seat can reduce the glare from other road users.

Remember to take your time and make sure you anticipate other road users; it can take practice but learning to link observations and anticipate what could happen on the road is an important skill to have. If you have concerns and find it difficult to see at night then consider an

appointment with your optician, it could be that some corrective vision is required.'

Remember to stay safe, pay attention and check your vehicle.



It's important you can safely stop in the distance you can see to be clear. At night this distance may be limited by your headlight's reach so adjust your speed accordingly.

iam
RoadSmart

Editor's Corner

Editor's Corner is an opportunity for me to air issues which occur to me in relation to cars and driving, while I am out and about. If you have anything you would like to air in a similar way, please get in touch.

Windscreen chips

I recently had a chip on my windscreen repaired, for which there was no charge, and that was great. The reason why insurance companies don't charge for chip repairs is that it is much cheaper for them to pay that cost than to pay their share of a full windscreen replacement if the chip gets too big to mend. It has to be less than the size of a pound coin to judge by the photos I had to take of the chip with a pound coin beside it. Let me tell you, it is not easy to keep a pound coin remaining in place on a sloping windscreen while you take the photo – a bit of BluTack comes in handy.

The thing was that the chip had been there for quite some time before I got round to having it mended and that could have been a problem. First, the chip could have got too big to be mended, or the windscreen might have shattered altogether, and then I would have had to fork out £75 excess for a windscreen replacement. Secondly, it was damaging the windscreen wiper. I hadn't taken much notice of the fact that it was quite rough, and the wiper was snagging on it every time I used it. You can still see where the chip was, but it is now lovely and smooth.

So, my recommendation is that if you have a chip on your windscreen, get it repaired as soon as possible.

Clare Hogg

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.

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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.