

OAD Newsletter

Covid Special November 2020

iam
RoadSmart
Oxfordshire
Advanced Drivers

www.iamroadsmart.com/groups/oad



The Empty Streets of Lockdown Oxford

No Traffic, No Cars, No People



Photos: Geoff Ayres

An Update from OAD Chair, Alex Lewis

OAD Chair, Alex Lewis, looks back over the past six months to review the way our group has coped with the many changes brought about by the Covid-19 crisis. Alex also considers the current situation and looks forward tentatively to what the future may bring.



Keeping the Group Alive

In March we took the difficult decision to suspend all driving activities and face to face meetings. We then held an online committee meeting to understand the situation of the group following membership renewals. We have since then worked on an informal basis to keep the group running as far as has been possible – in particular by arranging a number of virtual group meetings, each focussing on topics of interest to our members. Thanks are due to OAD members who have stepped forward to present these sessions.

Limited Opportunities for Driving – are Standards Slipping?

The pandemic and accompanying restrictions have no doubt had different effects on different people and driving is I suspect no exception. Whilst a healthcare professional whose primary journeys involve commuting will have noticed little difference aside from deserted roads, others will have had little opportunity to drive for much of the time since restrictions were imposed.

Personally, I drove little more than an occasional trip to the supermarket for three months earlier this year. Since then, with the resumption of the ability to travel, I have covered more miles. These include a trip through Europe, ending with the widely reported - safe and legal in my case - dash for the channel to avoid quarantine. Nevertheless business journeys, and hence my mileage, remain minimal.

I suspect that the situation this year will have had an impact on driving standards. Have some people become too used to the empty roads and therefore less aware of their surroundings as they drive? Have others' standards simply lapsed through the lack of a chance to practise? And how confident can we be that the condition of our largely unused vehicles?

As members of OAD I hope we are self-aware enough to consider whether any of these apply to us and if we need to make any adaptations. At the very least, developing a heightened awareness of other road users seems a sensible precaution.

Of course, I hope that we will be able to resume activities to support all our members with their driving before too long.

Where are we now – and what happens next?

In line with IAM guidance we will continue to hold all meetings online where possible – please look out for meeting invitations.

We are planning an online committee meeting when we will agree arrangements for the AGM, which is due.

We do not plan to arrange any formal drive outs at the moment as social distancing cannot - and the rule of six may not - be maintained in what might be perceived as a leisure activity. As of 5 November we have suspended all on road training in line with government and IAM Roadsmart guidance. We hope to resume runs once the various measures permit.

Any associates wishing to resume training are invited to contact associatecoordinator@iamoxon.org to discuss options. But please note that observer capacity is severely reduced at the moment and we may need to ask for your patience.

Associate Training Guidance

These measures apply to both demonstration drives and observed runs when they are able to resume.

- The session should not take place if either party is unsure or feels uncomfortable for any reason. In particular neither party should:
 - Be displaying symptoms of coronavirus currently listed as a dry cough, fever, or loss of taste or smell
 - Have been in contact with anyone who has tested positive for coronavirus in the previous 14 days
 - Be subject to any self-isolation requirements
 - Be waiting for the result of, or a slot to take, a coronavirus test, except as part of a study or routine employer requirements
 - Have tested positive for coronavirus in the previous 10 days
- The car should be in good clean condition and passenger touch areas such as door handles and seats sanitised immediately before the run. Hand sanitiser should be provided.
- Meet in a public place with suitable (open) facilities available.
- If conditions permit, conduct any pre and post drive discussions outside the vehicle at a distance of at least 2 metres with face masks removed.
- Masks that meet aviation standards must be worn at all times in the vehicle. Hands should be sanitised on entering and leaving the vehicle.
- Adequate ventilation should be ensured at all times. This may be by leaving windows slightly open or using the vehicle's ventilation system. In the latter case all vents must be open, with the fan running, and recirculation settings should not be used.

With best wishes,

Stay safe,

Alex

In case of any concerns or questions please contact me at chair@iamoxon.org.



The Future of IAM RoadSmart exciting developments in prospect

On 21st October, OAD was privileged to host a meeting for group members with Tony Greenidge, interim CEO of IAM RoadSmart. Tony presented us with a comprehensive overview of IAM RoadSmart and gave a hint of how it might - or ought - to develop in the coming years.

An opportunity to take stock

Tony explained that, given the extra challenges posed by the Coronavirus pandemic, when the CEO role became vacant, it was considered wise, subject to a formal process overseen by Council, to make an internal appointment to the post. The organisation is currently financially sound but with so much of its usual activity on hold, the lockdown offered an ideal and unexpected opportunity to take stock of IAM RoadSmart's road safety objectives and at a time when the context for driving and riding is rapidly evolving review ways in which these can be met.

Many OAD members will remember that, a few years ago, the *Institute of Advanced Motorists* was rebranded as IAM *RoadSmart* and everything that had previously been red turned blue! This time, however a review of the products and services it offers and potentially new target markets may need to be considered.

An ageing constituency

Although, overall, IAM RoadSmart is in good shape, it has to be admitted that the original concept of improving road safety through Advanced Driving courses is being challenged on many fronts. The core of the matter is that IAM RoadSmart continues to serve an ageing constituency. In 1956, shortly after its foundation, the average age of Associate members preparing for the Advanced Driving test was 25. Steadily increasing ever since now the average age of Associates is 50. Nearly a third of the national team of car Observers is over 70 years old.

The unescapable fact is that, compared to the time when IAM RoadSmart was established, many people's approach to driving – and the simple business of owning a car – has changed beyond recognition. For some, the ambition to own a car and enjoy the freedom it brings is turning into the hope they might be able to dispense with a car altogether and so bring down their carbon footprint. And for the many who continue to rely on car



ownership for their personal transport, how different the experience has become! Cars are much safer and far easier to drive.

The IAM RoadSmart 'planned system of driving' centres on a deft, expert use of gears and enough understanding of the mechanics of the car to develop a real sense of how to safely coax the best performance out of it. What does that do for the proud owner of the latest automatic – or electric – vehicle? And what will the best preparation be to 'drive' the autonomous driverless cars that are coming soon?

Tony explained that IAM RoadSmart will need to consider new ways of attracting and supporting other groups of drivers and riders.

The organisation already offers cutting edge e-learning courses for commercial drivers. [CHOICES](#) is an IAM RoadSmart programme for managers of commercial fleets; it includes on-line training that simulates the kind of in car coaching that is a feature of the Advanced Driving course. There are already specialised IAM RoadSmart on road training modules covering topics such as motorway driving and driving in towns. E-learning modules would cover similar topics.

The aim would be to support our traditional 'advanced' programme by creating bespoke training content that can meet the particular needs of specific groups of drivers/riders.

Central and local membership

Some Associates may not fully understand the relationship between the central management of IAM RoadSmart and the semi-autonomous local groups which deliver the product for which the IAM RoadSmart is best known – the Advanced Driver and Rider courses. As they prepare for their Advanced Test, Associate members identify closely with their local group but this relationship tends to loosen once an Associate passes their test. This is quite understandable since what most signed up for was an Advanced Driving

course – and nothing more. Many Associate members are genuinely confused and not particularly interested in how their local group relates to the national umbrella organisation. In future, IAM RoadSmart wants to establish a relationship with Associates at the point of purchase and in addition to the Advanced Driver and Rider course offer support, access to e-learning and an introduction to the benefits associated with membership.

Despite the challenges, the benefits of one-to-one coaching will not be forgotten – car and bike enthusiasts will still be able to enjoy meeting like-minded fellow petrolheads at a local group meeting. Nevertheless, it is good to learn that IAM RoadSmart looks set to continue its work making our roads safer by broadening its appeal and using innovative approaches to reach a wider range of drivers and riders.

OAD is looking forward to playing its part in the exciting developments ahead.



This year's AGM is due soon.

It now looks certain that this event will take place on line.

The date will be announced shortly, so please look out for an email confirming the date of the AGM and including the agenda and all other relevant documents.

The message will contain full instructions for members on how to join and take part in the meeting.

Jumping at the Chance of a Drive Out

Back in March, when the scale of the Covid-19 pandemic became clear, OAD suspended all activities that involved face-to-face meeting. That meant no group meetings, no drive outs and, of course, no observed drives for associate members on their advanced driving courses.

Eventually, on 4th July, driving lessons in England were allowed to resume and IAM RoadSmart issued guidance to allow us to resume observed drives as well, subject to strict social distancing precautions. There was no pressure for any associate or observer to resume contact straight away and, in fact, many observers and associate members preferred wait until they felt completely safe.

*One observer who decided to take up the challenge is OAD committee member **Lisa Collins**. We asked Lisa to tell us how it was going...*

At the start, I had rather pre-empted things and put my household into lockdown before it was officially announced.

When the new advice from IAM came through, I waited a few more weeks just to see what the figures were reading on the infection rate before I thought, Let's give it a go. I decided it was time to take the bull by the horns and ask my associate, Lucy, if she would like to try a drive out in August, if the conditions I laid out for both our safeties were met.



I have to state at this point that I had already built up a working relationship of trust with Lucy. She had been doing well and we had reached the stage of planning to enter her for the advanced test – then the lockdown put it all on hold.

The conditions we both agreed upon were that both of us would have hand gel with us; we would both wear masks; drive with the windows open to allow free movement of air; and she would clean the car beforehand with spray sanitiser cleaner.

Lucy jumped at the chance of a drive out and we quickly agreed on a date for it. However, I was a bit worried when she said she was going to start going to the gym in the week before the run. I asked her to message me to tell me what the conditions were like at the gym and if she felt safe in that environment.

A few days before the run Lucy got in touch to describe the gym set up and we both felt it was safe to proceed.

I arrived at our usual meeting place in Bicester and before I got in her car I sanitised my hands with the gel I had with me. Lucy's car was spotless, putting my own car to shame, I'm embarrassed to admit. (In my defence, I do sometimes haul goats in it.)

In my enthusiasm to use the hand gel to get in Lucy's car, I managed to squirt it on my leg and on the car seat before sitting in it - so you could say I was fully covered in the sanitisation department.

I put on my mask - as did Lucy - and climbed into her car.

The drive was in the middle of a heat wave with temperatures in the thirties, so having the windows open and the air conditioning on was a blessing. Windows open when there is a rainstorm going on was going to mean we would both get wet. That would be one instance where we would have had to cancel.

We drove to Oxford via the main route and then back through the beautiful countryside.

One potential problem that became very apparent with the experience was when Lucy said she couldn't hear me. We both had to raise our voices because (a) the masks muffled our voices and (b) with the windows open the road noise was very loud. I had to ensure I was turned towards her, as well. Another concern was we both wear glasses, so when we did talk they would steam up. Ensuring the glasses are on top of the masks helps to a certain extent and I've also read that rubbing the glass in soap and then polishing it off prevents it but I didn't try it. Another difficulty was sweaty forehead...I know, I know, pigs sweat but we ladies gently glow but it is what it is, and keeping hands away from the face was hard.

However, as Lucy said herself, she felt safe and we worked out the teething problems. I also felt safe. My confidence was strengthened by knowing Lucy well enough to be certain that she wasn't reckless of her own mortality. I'm not sure I would want to take anyone out who was at all sceptical about the seriousness of the Coronavirus outbreak or inclined to cut any corners with the safety advice.

When I got out of the car I was unceremoniously told to go away so that she could fumigate it – I felt reassured and only a little bit insulted.

I hope my experience will give observers and associates some confidence in resuming their observed drives and completing their advanced course.

Driving in a Mask Didn't Help...

Fiona Tankard was our first Advanced Test pass since the first lockdown. As she explains below, Fiona's road to success was not exactly straightforward...

My father bought me my Advanced Driving course as a Christmas present after I had driven him and my mother 100 miles in their car and he felt my driving needed to improve. Thanks, Dad.

The main issue was that on the motorway I sat with my left hand in my lap or on the gear-stick and he was very nervous about what would happen if a tyre burst. Well, I'd never thought of myself as a brilliant driver but I hadn't thought I was actually unsafe, so I decided I had nothing to lose by doing the course and I signed up.

My observer was Simon Denton and he took me out a few times and pointed out a few improvements I ought to make. In particular, I was driving very economically by changing up as soon as possible and pottering along when the road was empty behind me, rather than maintaining good progress. So I learned to ignore the green light on my dashboard

telling me to select a higher gear, and started to put my foot down a bit more on open roads.

Simon never had to tell me to keep both hands on the wheel as when I'm with an observer I never relax enough to take one off anyway - but I do always keep two hands on the wheel now.

My main problem was that, as I decelerated towards roundabouts, traffic lights and junctions, I found it really, really difficult not to change down through the gears and instead to decelerate in the existing gear - even if it's fifth - and put my clutch in at the last minute, then either apply the handbrake or select the correct gear to accelerate away. It



Fiona – ready for the test

just didn't feel right to be doing only ten miles an hour in a high gear, even if I was about to stop. That was the hardest habit to break.

Then, just as I was about to take my test, the pandemic struck and I didn't get my car out of the garage for eight months. When I finally did, I only had time for a couple of runs before my re-arranged test. Although I did all right on my check run, when I went to take the actual test it got off to a bad start and went downhill (in the wrong gear!) from there.

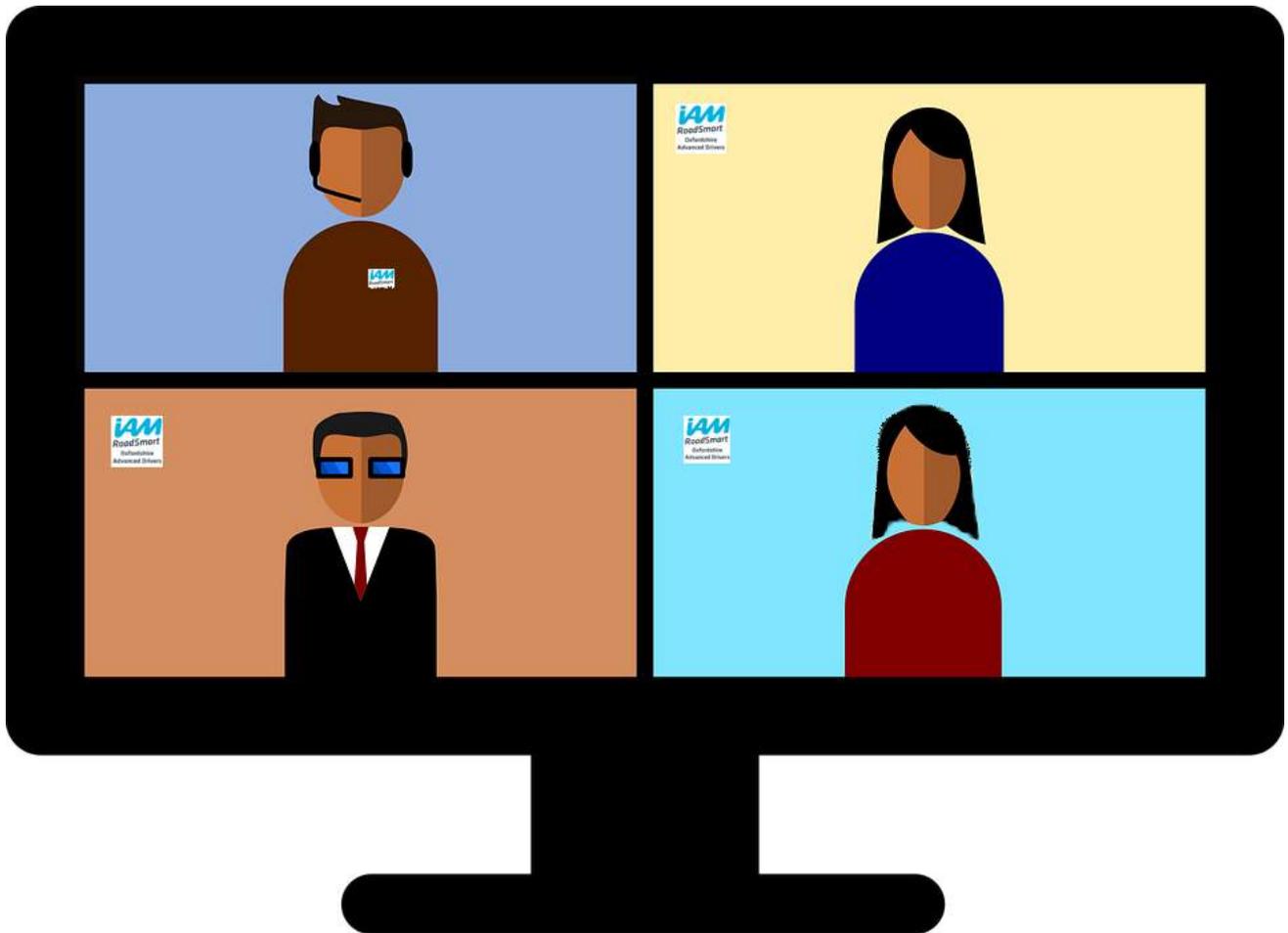
Driving in a mask didn't help and all the gear changing habits I'd worked hard to break came back with a vengeance and, for good measure, I also threw in another few errors which I hadn't been making before. So unsurprisingly, I failed.

I thought about giving up but as I knew I really hadn't driven like myself on the test, I decided to give it another go. Simon was

self-isolating but Andrew Carter very kindly stepped in and took me out for some additional sessions. He had the patience of a saint, and was even very forgiving when I completely forgot a session and Andrew waiting in the cold in Sainsbury's car park.

On the second occasion of taking the test, I passed. I think I was the first person in the group to take their test after the long hiatus, and I'm extremely grateful to all the volunteers for giving me so much time and patience. I can finally pay the subscription and become a full member!

I've been driving over thirty years and most of that has been on autopilot, deteriorating into worse habits as time went on. I would say that the main benefit of doing the course is becoming more aware and confident and making myself think about the gear and the speed all the time, rather than just pottering along in the traffic and slowing down if there isn't any.



Group Meetings – Lockdown Style

During lockdown, we were determined to find ways to continue to satisfy OAD members' interest in motor cars and driving. So we presented a series of virtual meetings over the summer

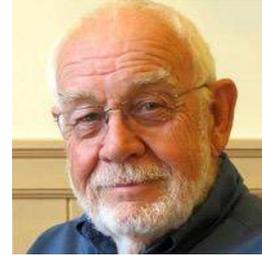
With a second surge of Covid infections seemingly on the way, it is likely that the virtual meetings will have to continue, starting with the presentation by IAM RoadSmart CEO, Tony Greenidge on Wednesday 21st October.

The virtual meetings are easy to access and, although everyone who logs in is able to ask questions and contribute to the discussion, it's not compulsory to do so! Full instructions for how to join are given in the email announcements.

If you haven't joined any of the virtual meetings so far, it's worth giving them a try. On the following pages, you can get a flavour of what you missed.

What Is A Classic Car?

by Nigel Champken-Woods



Nigel Champken-Woods gave an online presentation to OAD on the theme of Classic Cars. Nigel knows what he's talking about as he founded and is the Chair of Thame Classic Motor Club and owns two classics himself.

It is always difficult to say what a Classic Car is in fact it is easier to say what is not a classic car. A lot of people come up to you at a show and say what a nice vintage car you have and it's a 1962 Morris Minor!

So it is easier to start by going through those vehicles which have their own definitive classifications.

T

he first of these is **Veteran**.

This term refers to any car produced before 1904. A good example is this 1903 De Dion Bouton.



(Image courtesy of National Motor Museum, Beaulieu)



(Image courtesy of National Motor Museum, Beaulieu)

Next comes **Edwardian** – that's any car produced up to 1918.

Our example here is a 1914 Vauxhall Prince Henry

Then we have **Vintage** which covers cars to 1931, like this 1903 Morris Cowley



(Image courtesy of National Motor Museum, Beaulieu)

That was the easy bit! Those are *not* classic cars.

So, what is a classic car?

The Government does not have an official definition of a Classic Car but any motor car built before the end of December 1980 is exempt payment of Road Tax as an 'Historic vehicle'. Actually, they do have to be taxed but the fee is £0.00, though they must be insured in order to tax them.

They do not have to have an MOT if they were built more than 40 years ago but the majority of owners will have an MOT for peace of mind.

These are all examples of Classics:



Thame and District Classic Motor Club

The club was formed in 1997 when I wrote to the now defunct Thame Gazette suggesting we should form a club. At our first meeting we had twelve cars. Twenty three years later, the club is still going strong with about 100 cars altogether. The oldest is a 1919 Ford Model T and the newest a 2006 Porsche Boxter.

We meet on the last Thursday of the month at Thame Snooker Club except August and December we have films, quizzes, guest speakers and lots of friendly discussion and banter.

The Club organises two away weekends a year - one in the UK one to the continent.

These pictures from the trips give an idea of the range of cars owned by our members:



Concarneau, Brittany



At The Trench of Death, Dixmude,



Dambusters Tour, Woodhall Spa



Marmaduke, our Club Mascot, who was found in a puddle at the Channel Tunnel in 2001 and has been on every club trip since.



This is Laon in Northern France where they have a gathering of Classic and Sports cars every year with an average of 700 cars taking part.



One of the mountain passes over the Pyrenees which we visited about 15 years ago. The passes are very long climbs and cyclists go up there on their bikes on the Tour de France!



At the top of the Col

Look carefully and you will see that there is a modern interloper in the form of an Astra Convertible on the far left.

This is the reason for the Interloper.

Here's my Sunbeam Alpine in a ditch beside the A34 on the way to catch the ferry. I know I am an advanced driver but if you get a total collapse of the nearside front wheel bearing locking that wheel, you are going to go left and there is nothing you can do about it!



1962 Morris Minor Convertible & 2001 MGF Trophy 160 Special Edition



Laying Up A Car

Classic car owners often lay up their vehicles for long periods when they aren't driving them. A motor car can deteriorate quite quickly if it isn't used regularly, but there are few simple ways to keep an unused car in good condition.

- Rotate the tyres occasionally to avoid flat spots
- Leave the vehicle in gear with handbrake off to stop the brakes seizing
- If it is a modern car with alarm and immobiliser, disconnect the battery and use Discarnect or similar. Connect to the earth
- If you have Auto Stop/Start disable it so when you do use it you charge the battery all the time
- Use a Discarnect, as alarms etc will flatten the battery. But check with your insurers first.

[Discarnect Battery Master Switch](#)



Building a Locost Car 2000 - 04

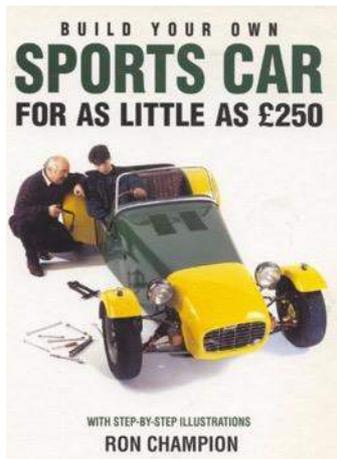
by Paul Flint



In the 1960's my first sports car was a TR3 which I renovated and used for a couple of years.

Then, later in 1969 I built a Mini Marcos which I collected from the factory. It consisted of a complete body shell factory built from marine ply and fibreglass with doors and bonnet fitted, trimmed inside and painted. To this you added components from a Mini. It took me six weeks to complete and I did over sixty thousand miles in it before I had to sell it to raise money towards buying a house.

It wasn't until 1999, with the family growing up, that I started to think again about renovating a car or building a kit car. Driving my friend's MG Midget reminded me of a Midget I had bought with my wife before the children came along so I started to think about renovating an old sports car. However, the thought of all the rust and expensive body panels made me think about a kit car.



I had always loved the Lotus 7 but sadly was out of my price range along with most other kit cars. Then, reading a copy of a Kit Car Magazine, I spotted an article on a Haynes best selling manual entitled *Build yourself a sports car for as little as £250* by Ron Champion. He was a teacher of motor engineering to senior school pupils, with whom he had been making low-cost sports cars from scratch at Oundle School.

This looked interesting so I sent off for the manual and soon was spending my spare time reading all about the construction.

The big difference with working from scratch with such a project was that the initial outlay was far smaller than purchasing a starter kit. Typical starter kits are around

two thousand pounds which still only gets you a chassis and maybe some suspension components.

With the Locost, my first purchase was a MIG welder, an angle grinder and some timber for a base. Once armed with this, I just needed some inch square section tubing to get started on building the chassis. So... a few hundred pounds and I was away.

A couple of months just spending a couple of hours in the garage each night saw the chassis completed.



The other item I needed was a Ford Escort MK11 which would be the donor car, from which I would transplant the engine, gearbox and back axle. This I found through the local for sales paper. It was located in Henley – not so far away.

The Escort had only done 48,000 miles so I felt that it would still have some life left in it and would save the cost of repairs. The purchase also came with a second car which was useful as I could run the lower mileage car for a while making sure it all worked fine while stripping the older car to see exactly where each component should be positioned on the chassis.



Work continued most evenings and, although progress was slow, it allowed the cost of the project to be spread out over time.

Kit car shows were a good source of the components that I felt I didn't want to make from scratch - like the brake, clutch and accelerator pedal box, engine mounts, exhaust manifold, silencer and body panels.

All this work was basically constructing a kit. Once everything had been fitted to the chassis it was all taken apart so I could paint the chassis and then fit newer components from the lower mileage Escort that I had been using on the road.

Once construction was completed the car needed an MOT and then an SVA test. This single vehicle approval test was carried out at Leighton Buzzard. See right, with me looking distinctly nervous.



A few items stopped the car passing first time but a I was back a couple of weeks later and it passed.

Taxed and insured, the car was on the road the next day and out for its first spin.

The only problem I had on the first run out was the brakes sticking on. This turned out to be caused by a bolt through the pedal fulcrum that I had tightened too much. It was easily fixed but there were some very hot discs on the ride home.

A
few



moderations and improvements were made over the years that I ran the kit car but it never let me down and was great fun to drive.

Total cost: around £4k.

Test Your Driving Knowledge



Can you tell your pandas from your pelicans?



In June, Tony Chalkly's motoring quiz included questions on the Highway Code, Roadcraft, Car Marques, Road Signs and much more.

[Click here](#) to try the quiz.

Buying a Cheap Broken-down Ferrari

In August, Ferrari enthusiast Jack Pegolaro shared with us the frustrations and pleasures of restoring a classic roadster to its former glory.

[Click this link](#) to visit Jack's YouTube channel on which he documents the whole process.



In September, OAD hosted a presentation by photographer Jason Dodd.

Jason is a professional photographer who

specialises in creating images of cars and motor racing for a variety of motor magazines.

[Click here](#) to see more of Jason's photographs.

Social Media Guidelines

A Message from IAM RoadSmart

Social media is a powerful way to engage and spread our message about the contribution Advanced Driving and Riding make to road safety. However, to be successful in achieving this, our shared role as ambassadors at local and national level, must be upheld at all times, both on the roads and online.

Recently, dash cam footage published on YouTube showed a self-declared IAM RoadSmart member driving in a way which fell significantly short of the advanced standards we coach people to achieve. The member concerned has now resigned. Any member who fails to uphold our high standards or drive in a way which falls short of our expectations can expect to be asked to account for their actions.

Groups are encouraged to refresh their awareness of the Social Media Guidelines in the Group Handbook, reprinted below.

- *Don't be abusive or rude towards others. This includes other contributors on this site, IAM RoadSmart staff and any other individual/organisation.*
- *Stay on topic. This group is for IAM RoadSmart news items and posts about driving, riding and road safety. It is not a forum for individual grievances or personal concerns.*
- *Please do not post inflammatory or aggressively negative comments about IAM RoadSmart or our content. We are happy for constructive debate to be aired in this group, but reserve the right to edit, hide, or remove posts that we believe to be damaging to our reputation.*
- *Keep it civil and respectful. Do not use swear words or offensive language.*
- *We will immediately remove any comments we deem to be racist, sexist, or discriminatory towards any group of individuals.*
- *Don't upload or post inappropriate content. We will remove such content.*
- *No spam.*
- *No solicitation.*
- *Observe copyright and trademark law.*
- *Keep it legal. We will remove all illegal content.*
- *No impersonations. We reserve the right to block profiles that appear to be fake. • Protect your privacy and respect the privacy of others.*
- *We reserve the right to edit, hide, or remove posts that break any of our guidelines.*
- *We will block any contributor that overtly or persistently goes against our group rules.*



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Where possible, we prefer contact via email.

Please don't use our personal email accounts for OAD business.