

## Chairman's Report

Hello everybody!

I start this bulletin with two main announcements, one rather sad, but the second with relief and happiness.

Firstly, I am sad to report the passing of one of our founder members. Julia Steer was one of ten people who, in 1981 formed a Taunton satellite of the Exeter Advanced Motorists. The Taunton satellite group grew quite quickly so that in 1997 the Group registered with the Charity Commission as the Taunton Group of Advanced Motorists (TGAM).

Julia helped to guide the group through its early years as, amongst other things, editor of the Group newsletter. In that and other ways, she made a huge contribution to the group and retained a lifelong interest in the group, becoming our Honorary Vice President in March 2018 and remained on post until her passing on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June.



Her funeral will take place at Taunton Crematorium on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July at 12:40pm where I will be joined by Brian Howe, seen in the picture congratulating Julia on her Vice-President appointment, and David Walton to not only represent WAM, but to pay our own, personal respects to a great lady and advocate for WAM and the IAM. May she rest in peace and be long remembered.

My second announcement, and in a much happier vein, is that Andrew Griffiths has returned from his enforced sabbatical and has taken up his Chief Observer role again. This is good for two main reasons.

1. WAM has the benefit of Andrew's skill, knowledge & expertise to call on once again, and

2. It means that his wife Katie has made a remarkable recovery from her health scare last year and is now fully on the mend again, which is absolutely wonderful news!

Well done Katie and welcome back, Andrew, you were missed.

I am very happy to report that after a bit of cajoling, pleading and begging, Chris Aston, one of our National Observers, has decided to join us on the Committee. Thank you very much Chris, you are very welcome.

But whilst I'm happy that Chris has joined us, again I can't help but notice that (with the exception of Pauline Wills our Associate Co-ordinator) it always seems to be the Observers, who already work hard on behalf of the Group, who put themselves forward for yet more work.

Now, with that in mind, you'll remember that in my first bulletin as Chairman last year I made an appeal to **all** our members to consider the skills that you have that would help to steer WAM towards our long term future. You don't necessarily have to join the Committee (although that would be preferable) but just work with us as consultants.

We are still looking for people with the following skills & knowledge:

- Leadership
- Motivation
- Communication
- Organisational
- Financial Management
- Marketing & Social Media.

But more than anything else, we need people with bags of ideas and enthusiasm. The current committee is getting a bit long in the tooth and we really do need some extra help! We meet for a couple of hours every other

*No-one can do everything, but everyone can do something.*

month, so the pull on your time shouldn't be too onerous. Whether you're a full member or associate, please feel free to drop me a line at [chairman@wessexam.uk](mailto:chairman@wessexam.uk) . All offers of help will be gratefully received and who knows, you might even enjoy yourself!

So what have we been up to this last couple of months?

Our April speaker was Kenneth Lavery a retired Surgical Neurologist who gave a very lively and entertaining talk on his time in surgery, from Houseman to Consultant and into retirement. With not one hint of blood & gore, this was by far one of the funniest talks I've heard in a very long time. If you weren't with us in April, I would urge you to take any opportunity you have to hear him speak. You won't be disappointed.

Our May speaker was... Kenneth Lavery! Except this time, he came to us to talk about the Royal National Lifeboat Institute, where he works as a shore based volunteer. This was another entertaining but very insightful talk, this time about the RNLI and the people who work there.

June was our annual Car Skills night. This year's winner was Mark Stevenson, who took home the Camelot Cup for his prowess on the 'Skills Course' that we set up on the car park of Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall. Remember that except for the Observers, this annual event is open to all WAM members and is always very well received by those who attend.

My grateful thanks to our Observers, David Walton; Isobel Jennings; Chris Aston & Jon Evans for helping to organise and run a safe & happy event.

Our next gathering will be the annual Show & Tell evening where members are invited to come along and wax lyrical about their cars; ancient, old or modern with the prospect of winning the 006 cup. And just to round off the night there will be a free buffet for all attendees. The venue for this extravaganza is the Windwhistle Inn, Cricket St. Thomas, Chard TA20 4DQ. Entry is free and a good night's entertainment is guaranteed. If you would like to come along (and why not?!) then just please drop me a line at [chairman@wessexam.uk](mailto:chairman@wessexam.uk) giving me the numbers in your party for catering purposes.

As always, thanks for taking the time to read my scribblings. Hopefully you'll be able to join us at the remainder of this year's Member's Evenings. In the meantime, stay safe, stay well and enjoy your driving.

Barry  
Chairman  
[chairman@wessexam.uk](mailto:chairman@wessexam.uk)

## Associate Coordinator Report

Since the April bulletin we have been joined by four new Associates so welcome to Richard Willcocks, Sue Tutton, Sally Barber and Lianna Page-Symonds.

We currently have fourteen Associates at different stages along their journey with WAM. Thirteen of these have been allocated an Observer, seven are currently out on the road, three are due to start very soon and three are on hold for various reasons. That leaves just one Associate on our waiting list. Our group covers a large geographical area approximately 90 miles west to east and 30 miles north to south at its farthest points so it may not be appropriate to allocate the first available Observer to an Associate living near the boundary.

Three members have recently passed their Advanced Driver Test. Fiona Stevens (observed by David Walton), Morrough Kavanagh (observed by Barry Keenan) achieved a F1RST and Andrew Redfern (observed by Chris Aston) also achieved a F1RST. Congratulations to you all.



## My Advanced Driving Course

I guess the idea to complete an Advanced Driving Course all started when I bought a course for my daughter's Christmas present. The family unanimously agree that I have very little imagination when it comes to buying presents but I thought it was inspired! So the competition was on to try and keep up with her.

I also worked with Devon and Cornwall Police as a Civilian a good few years ago and always fancied the idea of a driving course. I wish I had done it a lot sooner!

Everyone at WAM have been great. They all give their time for free and it is humbling to be welcomed with the enthusiasm and encouragement that is freely handed out.

Pauline alone must work tirelessly behind the scenes to get everything clerical organised.

As for the driving; Chris Aston has been brilliant. From the very start he was encouraging and calmly explained all aspects of each progressive drive like a true professional. I suspect the foot well of my car is a couple of inches longer than it used to be but you would never have picked it up from his demeanour.

A couple of trips with Barry soon highlighted my shortcomings but once again his firm encouragement was expertly delivered; just what I needed.

Test Day. B&Q car park, Chard. Doug Miners jumped into my car before I had even turned it off! Cockpit checks? "No, you got here OK didn't you?" Off we went! Another true professional; I was able to settle into the driving from the start, as there was little hint that he was there as an examiner. He made relaxed conversation but believe me he missed nothing!

What can I say? It has been a very worthwhile and rewarding experience. It has made me much more aware when I am driving. True, I have survived 60 years driving in quite a few different countries without too many incidents but nice to be approaching the task with a sharpened awareness.

Andy Redfern

## 10th Anniversary of AA Think Bikes Campaign

Government statistics released last September reveal that in 2022, 91 cyclists (down 20% on 2014 figures), and 350 motorcyclists (up 5% on 2014) were killed, and 15,693 cyclists (down 25% on 2014) and 16,943 motorcyclists (down almost 17% on 2014) were injured in Great Britain.

In January 2022, the Highway Code was changed to include or update several rules to promote safety on the road, whilst supporting a healthy, sustainable and efficient transport system to make cyclists feel and be safer on the roads.

These included a "Hierarchy of Road Users", new rules on road positioning for cyclists and passing distance for drivers.

New research conducted by The AA reveals that 89% of drivers agreed 'it's sometimes hard to see cyclists' which supports our call for drivers to be more alert and always Think Bikes.

When the changes to the highway code were introduced, they provided more specific advice on passing distances and state - "leave at least 1.5 metres when overtaking cyclists at speeds of up to 30mph, and give them more space when overtaking at higher speeds." However, 37% of the respondents to our survey say they get nervous when overtaking cyclists with younger drivers (53%) more nervous than older drivers (38%).

On a positive note, the survey found that 95% said that cyclists were vulnerable, and they always give them extra space.

In terms of attitudes between cyclists and drivers the survey shows that more needs to be done to promote harmony – 15% said they'd lost their temper and used hand signals towards a cyclist and 20% said they'd been on the receiving end of this type of behaviour. The AA points out that drivers are often cyclists and most adult cyclists are also drivers.

### Blue Light Aware

Based on guidance contained within the Highway Code, Blue Light Aware is a resource containing short videos and animations, produced on behalf of the emergency services. Their crews rely on the help of other road users when they're on a 'blue light' journey. By taking the time to watch Blue Light Aware you will better understand the needs of emergency drivers, reducing the risks you face, while contributing to a safer road environment. You may also be helping to save a life... <https://www.bluelightaware.org.uk>

## A glaring problem

The RAC is calling on the Government to commission an independent study into the issue of headlight glare after new research found 85% of those affected believe the problem is getting worse.

An RAC survey of 2,000 drivers found a huge nine-in-10 (89%) think at least some headlights on cars on the road today are too bright, of which three-in-10 (28%) – a higher proportion than ever – think most are. Of the all these drivers who complain about the brightness of car headlights, some 91% say they get dazzled when driving with three-quarters (74%) saying this happens regularly.

When it comes to the effects of glare on drivers, two-in-three (67%) who suffer say they have to slow down considerably until they can see clearly again, while a similar proportion (64%) believe some headlights are so bright they risk causing accidents. In fact, five per cent of these drivers state they have nearly been involved in a collision themselves.

Alarmingly, nearly one-in-10 (7%) say they find headlight glare so bad that they avoid driving at night altogether, a figure that rises to 14% for drivers aged 65 and over.

While the RAC has been surveying drivers on dazzling headlights since 2018, these new findings show more drivers than ever appear to be suffering from them, with 85% of those affected stating they believe the problem is getting worse.

As part of its study, the RAC asked drivers to estimate how long it takes them to see clearly again after getting dazzled by other drivers' lights. While 68% say it takes between one and five seconds, one-in-10 (11%) say it takes six or more – which, staggeringly, is enough for a driver travelling at 60mph to cover 160 metres, the equivalent of 40 car lengths.

The reasons drivers perceive headlight glare to be such an issue are less clear, although an overwhelming 87% of dazzled drivers think it is mainly due to the fact some lights just appear much brighter. This could be as a result of the increasing prevalence of cars fitted with LED headlights, leading to a much more intense and focused beam that the human eye reacts differently to, compared to a conventional 'yellower' halogen bulb. While LED headlights are great for improving a driver's view of the road ahead, this can be to the detriment of other road users who encounter them. However, more than four-in-10 (44%) think the dazzling is caused by badly aligned headlights. A Freedom of Information request submitted to the

Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) in November 2023 shows that since 2019, an average of 1.6m, or 5%, of Class 4 vehicles – which includes passenger cars – failed their MOTs as a result of poor headlight aim. What's more, with the DVSA stating in 2016 that 'headlamp aim consistently tops the MOT compliance survey as one of the most likely items to be assessed incorrectly by testers', the actual figure could be much higher.

The increasing popularity of cars that sit higher on the road, especially SUVs, may also be a factor with those in conventional cars such as hatchbacks, saloons or estates suffering the most. Six-in-10 drivers (62%) of conventional cars blame the dazzling on higher vehicles, whereas only 35% of those in higher vehicles point the finger at similarly sized vehicles.

But whatever the cause or causes of headlight glare, it is clear how strongly drivers feel about the issue with 81% saying more should be done to tackle it – a figure that rises to 87% among drivers aged 45 to 54.

Government collision statistics shows that since 2013, there has been an average of 280 collisions a year where dazzling headlights were a contributory factor. Of these, six a year involved someone losing their life. The actual number may be higher if an investigation was unable to determine whether or not a collision was directly or indirectly caused by the glare from another vehicle's headlights.

As a result of the sentiment among drivers, the RAC has raised the issue of headlight glare with the Department for Transport and has been working with a member of the House of Lords, Baroness Hayter, to make drivers' concerns known among Government officials. The RAC provided details of its research to go into [a report published last week](#) and will be meeting with the Government this month to discuss it.

### Dealing with glare – what to do if you find you're getting dazzled

- **Always use your rear-view mirror properly at night.** Some newer cars have self-dimming rear-view mirrors that can reduce dazzle from vehicles behind – if you're changing your car soon, look for one that has such a mirror fitted. But most drivers still need to manually adjust their mirrors in the dark to reduce glare. About half the drivers surveyed by the RAC who reported getting dazzled said they do so at night (54%).
- **Speak to your optometrist.** Just 6% of drivers told the RAC they'd talked to their optician about glare. For those who wear glasses, a glare-minimising coating can help – something a quarter (25%) of affected drivers said they are benefitting from.



## WHERE WILL YOUR TYRES TAKE YOU?

Wherever you're headed, get there on safe tyres.



TyreSafe, the UK tyre safety organisation, has announced the launch of its spring campaign, titled “Where will your tyres take you today?” The campaign aims to raise awareness about the critical importance of tyre safety and encourage motorists to perform regular checks to ensure safe journeys. The campaign is underpinned by alarming statistics, and a case for action that demonstrates there is a concerning lack of knowledge and understanding about the potential disastrous consequences that driving on defective tyres could have.

- Over 6 million tyres in the UK have illegal tread each year, risking fines of up to £2,500 per tyre and 3 penalty points.

- Over 2 million MOT failures occur each year due to tyre defects, with one million classified as dangerous.

- 152 people are killed or seriously injured in accidents related to defective tyres every year, a figure on par with mobile phone-related incidents.

- 1 in 5 vehicle breakdowns on motorways and A roads result from tyre defects, equating to roughly 50,000 breakdowns annually on the motorway network alone.

TyreSafe’s Spring campaign plays on the sense of adventure and exploration that comes with the warmer weather, and with that an increase in road trips and days out. The campaign uses the A.C.T acronym – Air pressure, Condition, Tread to give a practical and accessible means to performing checks without the need for special equipment. By taking proactive steps to maintain tyre safety, motorists can prevent accidents, breakdowns, and unnecessary expenses.

## 500,000 deaths ‘a grim and shaming milestone’

Sixty organisations have set out four ‘life-saving priorities’ for the next government as the UK passed 500,000 road deaths since records began in 1926.

The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) pointed out that the UK has seen a stagnation in road safety improvements since 2010 – ‘from being a global leader in road safety, it is now lagging behind other nations’.

Five people a day die on UK roads, with more than 30,000 individuals killed or seriously injured annually, amounting to a societal and economic cost of approximately £43.5bn a year.

PACTS has co-ordinated what it called a groundbreaking [manifesto](#) calling for immediate and strategic action to address the persistent issue of road fatalities and serious injuries in the UK.

With support from more than 60 organisations and growing by the day, the manifesto outlines four strategic priorities aimed at revolutionising road safety and significantly reducing fatalities and serious injuries on UK roads.

These are:

1. Developing a National Road Safety Strategy – Implement a Safe System Strategy focused on prevention, protection and post-collision response, coupled with evidence-based targets and robust safety performance indicators.

2. Establishing a Road Safety Investigation Branch – An independent body modelled after existing transportation safety branches to analyse road incidents and provide actionable insights for preventing future tragedies.

3. Introducing Graduated Driver Licensing – A progressive licensing system to support young drivers by limiting high-risk driving situations, a measure proven to reduce fatalities by up to 40%.

4. Adopting Advanced Vehicle Safety Regulations – Immediate implementation of the world-leading vehicle safety standards, mandating critical technologies such as Automatic Emergency Braking and Intelligent Speed Assistance.

PACTS urged the incoming government to prioritise these strategies within the first 100 days of office.

## **New car speed limiter laws from 7 July: what you need to know**

### **A new EU law designed to reduce speeding and improve road safety will apply to all new cars sold in the European Union from 7 July 2024.**

The law requires manufacturers to fit intelligent speed assistance (ISA) technology to their cars, but they can implement it in various ways – including automatically limiting the car's speed.

Department for Transport confirmed that the new law would apply to Northern Ireland, but that it would not be mandated in England, Scotland or Wales. However, it's likely new cars sold in the UK will still have ISA technology as standard.

### **What is intelligent speed assistance?**

ISA detects the speed limit on roads using a combination of GPS and cameras that are designed to recognise speed signs. It then uses this information to either limit your speed or produce a visual or audible warning when you go over the limit.

ISA actually became a legal requirement for all new car models that were introduced from July 2022. From 7 July 2024, this law will apply to all new cars sold in the EU and Northern Ireland regardless of when they were first launched.

Manufacturers can fit cars with four different ISA systems (sound warnings, vibration warnings, feedback through the accelerator pedal or a direct speed control function), which are intended to prevent the driver from exceeding the detected speed limit. Regardless of the system chosen by the manufacturer, the new law states that it must activate automatically each time you start your car and can't be permanently deactivated.

If your car's ISA system is set to automatically limit the speed you travel at, you'll be able to temporarily deactivate it by pressing hard on the accelerator, but it will be reactivated every time you start your car.

### **Why is the new law being introduced?**

This change is being introduced by the European Union and is based on recommendations by the European Transport Safety Council, a not-for-

profit organisation that argues that the introduction of mandatory ISA technology across all new cars would reduce European road deaths by 20%.

The European Commission says the introduction of ISA could reduce both insurance costs and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and may also help to slow down older cars that don't have ISA.

While the UK is no longer part of the European Union, the law will still be mandated in Northern Ireland. Although this means it's not a legal requirement for new cars sold in England, Scotland or Wales to have ISA fitted, the likelihood is that most manufacturers will include it.

### **How accurate is speed camera recognition?**

ISA is dependent on GPS and car cameras accurately detecting the speed limit of the road you're travelling on.

However, we've found ISA to be unreliable on many of the cars we've tested.

We've encountered instances on 70mph dual carriageways when a car has mistakenly detected the 30mph limit of an adjacent road. We've also had multiple instances where a car has registered the speed limit as being 80mph in 30mph zones.

### **How has the car industry reacted?**

We asked a number of major car brands what their plan is for introducing ISA in the UK.

Vauxhall told us that all of its cars sold in the UK will comply with the EU law, and that the default setting will be for ISA to be permanently enabled. Kia said that from its 2025 model year, all of its UK cars will be fitted with ISA and that most of its 2024 cars already come fitted with ISA.

Commenting on the fact that the law won't apply to new cars sold in Great Britain, Mike Hawes from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) told us: 'The UK has some of the safest roads in the world, but action to improve our record still further should be welcomed. Bearing in mind the heavily integrated nature of the UK and European automotive sectors, regulatory divergence is not advantageous for either party.'

## WAM events for the rest of the year

17 <sup>th</sup> July	Members' Evening - Show and Tell	<p>At The Windwhistle Inn. Come along and introduce your car as if you were introducing it at the start of an Advanced Driving Test. (A demonstration will be given on the evening).</p> <p>Everyone is a judge on the Show and Tell evening and the most popular introduction together with the best presented car will be awarded a prize. You do not have to take part if you do not wish to, just come along for the evening and the company.</p> <p>Please let us know if you are coming for catering reasons.</p>
August	No formal members' evening in August	
18 <sup>th</sup> September	Members' Evening - The making of the Morgan Sports Car	Alex Sully is our September speaker. Alex will give his talk on the making of the Morgan Sports Car.
24 <sup>th</sup> September	Jaguar track day at Castle Coombe	<p>Sponsored by JEC. There will be an opportunity to experience typically 3 laps of the circuit in a very fast racing Jaguar with a professional racing driver.</p> <p>There's a charge of £10 per 3 laps and you can chose different jaguars to go in. If you want to go in 3 different jags it would be £30. Thrilling stuff.</p>
16 <sup>th</sup> October	Members' Evening - The History of Jaguar Racing	Colin Porter from Jaguar Enthusiasts Club will be coming to tell us about the history of Jaguar racing.
20 <sup>th</sup> November	AGM	

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