

# e-NEWSLETTER

**iAM**  
*RoadSmart*

## WESSEX ADVANCED MOTORISTS



[www.wessexam.uk](http://www.wessexam.uk)

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Summer 2020





# WESSEX ADVANCED MOTORISTS

# e-NEWSLETTER

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Any comments or opinions expressed in this e-Newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily of the Institute of Advanced Motorists Ltd., Editor or Committee. Please send any items for consideration to be included in the next e-Newsletter to David Walton, our Editor (details on the back page). Items will be published ASAP.

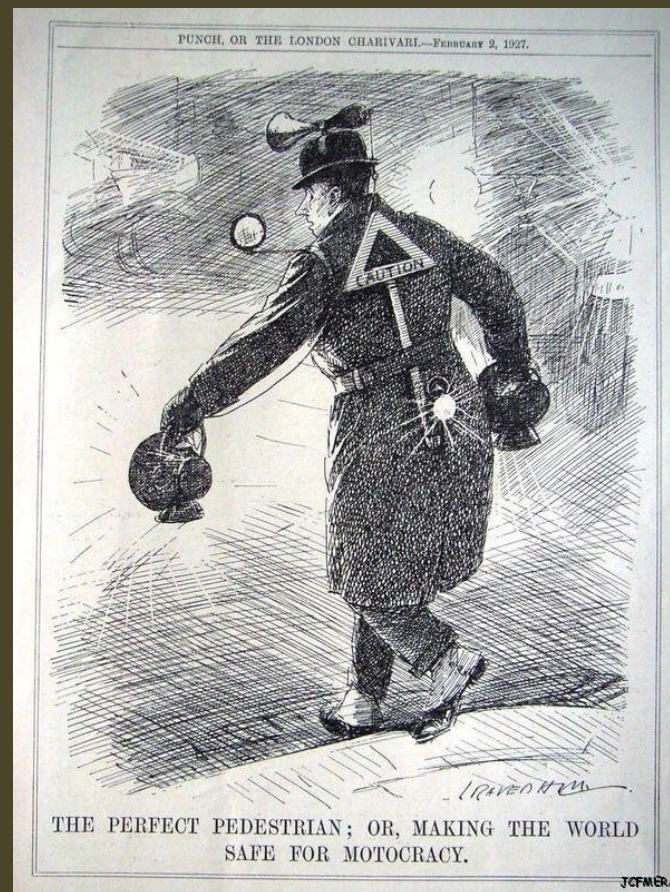
#### **GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION**

Members' details, i.e. names, addresses and telephone numbers, are kept on computer to assist group administration. This information will not be passed outside the IAM. WAM may from time to time publish photographs taken at group events in this newsletter and on the website or display them at publicity events. If you do not wish to have your photo taken or published by WAM, please contact the Editor in writing (contact details on the back page).

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# Chairman's Corner



At the time of writing, the UK will have been in lockdown for 4 weeks; I was in lockdown before lockdown was implemented! I hope this Newsletter finds you in good health and in good spirits.

There is very little coming out from IAM RoadSmart; Support staff are working from home, selling driver/rider courses and driving assessments and reviews. RoadSmart's Area and Regional managers have been furloughed and all Field Operations have been referred upwards to Amanda Smith who is working from home in Sussex; those of you who came to our classic car show in 2019 will remember Amanda as our Guest of Honour.

Group activity is minimal and what there is, is confined to on-line things such as crosswords,



**By Andrew Griffiths**





quiz etc. Last month, WAM produced its first monthly bulletin aimed to help us stay connected and to lift spirits through this awful pandemic; this month we have our regular Newsletter so the next bulletin will be in June. I hope you enjoyed reading our first bulletin; you will have noticed that articles were mainly on things other than motoring and I would like to thank all contributors for their entertaining and spirit-lifting stories. Additionally, I must commend Nigel for his article on “Minding the Mind”... fascinating!

Our committee continues to stay in contact with each other and David (sec), Barry (Vice-Chair, Events) and I trialled a video conference meeting on-line recently in readiness for our forthcoming committee meeting. It was a hoot! This is a great way of staying in touch and not just for business meetings.

I've used Zoom with my grandchildren and children and while it's better than just a telephone call, we can see each other but it's painful that we can't hug... that is something I'm really looking forward to when the time comes. My 4 year old granddaughter asked me if she could come and stay with us “when the germs have gone away”. Yes definitely, can't be soon enough!

If anyone has something they think may help keep our spirits lifted, please send a short story to David Walton; a side of A4 would be most welcome. And as you see in our first edition, the stories don't need to be about the Highway Code!

In the meantime, please stay well.

My best wishes,

Andrew



# THE COMMITTEE



Committee meetings (for committee members ONLY) are held bimonthly at 7:30pm on the first Wednesday of the month at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall. If, as a group member, you need to raise any issue at committee level, then please feel free to contact any committee member to put your views to the next committee meeting.

Chairman	Andrew Griffiths	<a href="mailto:chair@wessexam.uk">chair@wessexam.uk</a>
Vice Chairman/Events Coordinator	Barry Keenan	<a href="mailto:events@wessexam.uk">events@wessexam.uk</a>
Secretary/Membership Secretary	David Walton	<a href="mailto:secretary@wessexam.uk">secretary@wessexam.uk</a>
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# GROUP OBSERVERS



Chief Observer, Masters Mentor & LOA	Andrew Griffiths
National Observer & LOA	Barry Keenan
National Observer	Delphine West-King
Local Observer	Brian Dodd
Local Observer	Andrew Hepworth
Local Observer	Isobel Jennings
Local Observer	Ted Parks
Local Observer	Hugh Todd
Local Observer	Guy Tucker
Local Observer	David Walton
Local Observer	Michael Wotton

Group observers must be fully paid up Wessex Group AND National IAM members at ALL times to carry out your vital observer roles.

Always check that your associate has an up to date membership card before departing on any observed drives. Please try to make and maintain contact with your new associates and listen to any concerns or fears they may have. When associates pass their Advanced Driving Test, PLEASE inform the associate coordinator as soon as possible as we have a duty to keep accurate and up to date records. All new associate members are normally teamed up with a conveniently placed observer. If you have any problems please contact our chief observer, Andrew Griffiths.

The following IAM and WAM members are Driving Standards Agency Approved Driving Instructors:

Nick Tapp 07900 900678 [niktapp@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:niktapp@hotmail.co.uk)  
Graham Tuffey 07916 137915 [www.passwithgraham.co.uk](http://www.passwithgraham.co.uk)

Members and/or enquirers must establish their own facts and details when contacting a Driving Instructor. If any other IAM and WAM full member driving instructors wish to be on the above list, contact the newsletter editor. (NB: You MUST remain *full* IAM and WAM members at all times.)



# PRESIDENT'S PONDERINGS



Stay Home. Stay Safe. Stay Healthy.

## Motoring Milestones. (cont')

**1901** – In Germany, the Daimler Company makes the first Mercedes car and in America Olds produced 425 Oldsmobiles.

**1903** – In Britain, the speed limit is raised to 20 mph and cars are registered and given numbers. Henry Ford sells his first car in America and Spyker makes the first six-cylinder car in Holland.

**1904** – Sir Frederick Henry Royce makes his first car. Frenchman, Louis Rigolly, sets a new land speed record of 103.561 mph on a beach at Ostend, Belgium, driving a 13.5 litre Gobron-Brillié racing car.



by Brian Howe







**1905** – The Automobile Association (AA) is formed to combat police speed trapping. The first patrols were carried out on bicycles. Roadside petrol pumps appear in the USA.

**1907** – Brooklands is opened as the world's first permanent motor racing circuit.

**1908** – Henry Ford introduces the Model T. New York to Paris race run. Only three of the six contestants completed the course.

**1912** – Cadillac introduce electric self-starter and integrated electric light and ignition system. In Britain, BSA, (Birmingham Small Arms Company), introduce all-steel bodywork without a wooden frame.

**1914** – Left-hand drive becomes virtually standard in the USA and the first curved windcreens are seen.

**1916** – America produced more than one million cars and introduced mechanical windscreen wipers.

**1919** – Hispano-Suiza make a car with servo-assisted four-wheel braking. Austin hide the spare wheel in the tail of the car.

**1921** – Coil and battery ignition begins to replace magneto ignition. Mercedes catalogue supercharged cars. America introduces the reversing light and Britain introduced the log book.

**1922** – The Austin Seven makes its first appearance. A Daimler is fitted with a radio. Pneumatic tyres come into use.

**1923** – Ford produces two million cars in a year. Four-wheel braking is established.

**1924** – Bentley wins the second Le Mans race. Italy builds 12 miles of motorway. Wills-Sainte Claire introduces electric fuel pumps. Car bodies are lower to the ground and closed cars bid to outsell open ones. The first fully Soviet-made vehicles are manufactured by the AMO plant in Moscow.

**1926** – Heaters fed from the cooling system are introduced in America. Stutz and Rickenbacker cars use safety glass and Talbot provide arrow-type direction indicators and an oil pressure warning light.

**1927** – White lines used to divide roads in Britain. Sir Henry Segrave sets new land





speed record of 203.79 mph in Sunbeam Mystery (the Slug) at the Daytona Beach Road course.

**1928** – Alvis makes a car with front-wheel drive and all independent suspension. Three colour traffic lights are installed in Britain. Synchromesh gears introduced.

**1934** – Citroën adopt front-wheel drive and Ford market the first mass produced V8 engine. Running boards starting to disappear on new car designs.

**1935** – Major Sir Malcolm Campbell MBE sets new 300 mph plus land speed record averaging 301.337 mph in two passes at Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah. Triumph offers windscreen washers as factory equipment. Britain gets 30 mph speed limits in towns. Parking meters appear in Oklahoma City, USA. Radiators begin to be concealed beneath the body shell.

**1938** – Hitler lays the cornerstone of the Volkswagen factory near Fallersleben in Lower Saxony. VW people's car introduced. Cadillac pioneer modern steering column gear change. Safety glass windcreens become standard in Britain.

**1949** – Chrysler pioneer key-starting and disc brakes.

**1950** – Rover make Jet 1, the first gas turbine car, as wartime petrol rationing ends in Britain. Car wings integrated with the body.

**1951** – Chrysler offer full power steering. China makes first private car. Zebra crossings introduced to Britain.

**1952** – The film *Genevieve* creates mass interest in old cars and the Montagu Motor Museum opens in Britain with just three cars.

**1953** – Dunlop re-introduce tubeless tyres originally used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Michelin introduces X radial.

**1955** – A boom year for estate cars. Mercedes make fuel-injection tourers. Two-piece windscreen dying out. The millionth VW Beetle is delivered.

**1957** – Cadillac and Lincoln fit twin headlamp systems. Rear fins grow huge, (mainly in the USA). Jim Russel opens his school for racing drivers at Snetterton.

**1959** – Sir Alexander Arnold Constantine Issigonis, CBE, FRS, RDI, an English-Greek car designer, develops the ground-breaking





and influential Austin Seven mini and its Morris twin, launched by the British Motor Corporation. British police introduce radar speed traps.

**1961** – Self service petrol pumps open in Britain.

**1963** – NSU shows production car powered by a single rotor Wankel rotary engine, 498cc producing 50 bhp (37kW) at 5,500 rpm. American, Craig Breedlove puts land speed record at 407 mph.

**1965** – Craig Breedlove sets record at over 600 mph. In December Britain brings in new 70 mph speed limit on motorways and dual carriageways.

**1967** – Citroën show swivelling headlamps which turn with the front wheels. British authorities introduce compulsory seat belts.

I think most of us know the later, post 1967 motoring milestones. But this is as far as my reference book goes. Information, facts and figures mostly taken from *A Picture History of the Automobile*. 1973. Other information and some expansions and clarifications from Google and Wikipedia.

## Charlie the Chocolate Van

For some time Charlie has had a faulty heater control switch, meaning that the blower did not work on number 3 position and 1 and 2 were not easy to set. With a bit more time on my hands, and the fact that it didn't matter if I did not complete the task in one day, I decided to strip out part of the dash and the heater control assembly, so that I could strip the assembly to remove the switch. To give myself more room I removed both front seats.

I found two corroded terminals in the connecting block as well as a badly soldered connection for position 3. Having located the soldering iron that I had not used for 36 years, I set about cleaning and re-soldering the offending connection. All parts were thoroughly cleaned on re-assembly and I achieved a successful repair.

The controls are now much more positive on selection and number 3 works fine. I took the opportunity to fully valet the cab area including washing the plastic panels in the kitchen sink.









Charlie has benefited from a wash and leather and a trial polish on the bonnet. He has also been re-registered at DVLA to be reunited with his original age-related registration number. The private plate is now on retention and will be put up for sale once the country opens for business again. I have still been carrying out my POWDERY checks. The front right hand tyre was soft and that turned out to be a bead seal leak which was sorted by Kwik Fit. I know they are not everyone's cup of tea, but I find the staff extremely accommodating and friendly, also, they love Charlie. His battery also had to be removed to be put on charge because he refused to start one morning. Everything else is topped up and ready for the off when we get the all-clear from government. On 1<sup>st</sup> June, Charlie will be 31 years old. Brian Howe.





# Editor's Notes



This is a shorter newsletter than usual for several reasons; some of the usual content went into the bulletin last month, there is nothing going on with training or events within the group due to Covid-19 and IAM RoadSmart is not issuing much in the way of blogs or tips – and anyway, if you cannot drive, it would be frustrating to read a whole load of articles about driving. In fact, that is why you will find more than the usual proportion of non-car related pieces this time.

Assuming that the lockdown is still in place, I will try to put out another monthly bulletin in early June, so if you have anything at all that you think our members might be entertained or amused by, please send it to [Ed@wessexam.uk](mailto:Ed@wessexam.uk)

Keep safe,

David

## Advanced Driving Test Passes

Congratulations to one member who has recently passed his Advanced Driving Test; with a F1RST.

### OBSERVED BY

Ed Jones

David Walton

## The Membership Register

This quarter we only have two new group members; probably due to Covid-19. We hope you enjoy your association with Wessex and we look forward to welcoming you to our meetings, events and activities when we get going again.

	<u>TOWN</u>	<u>CLASS</u>
Adrian Lavender	Taunton	Associate
Charles Farrand	Taunton	Associate





# Events Corner



My fellow WAMers,

Hello and welcome to my 'Events Corner' for the summer edition of the WAM 2020 Newsletter.

Looking out of my window I can see that everything in the garden is great! The bulbs and flowers are springing into life, the bees are busy, there's blossom aplenty on my various fruit trees and everything in my



little patch of land is rosy. Which is nice, because let's face it, at the moment life as we know it has been *completely* turned on its head by this awful Covid-19 virus, don't you think?



**By Barry Keenan, Events Co-ordinator**





I've mentioned in the past that the field behind my garden is normally a hive of activity with dog walkers galore, ball games aplenty and children from the school across the way using it as an extension of their own playing field. Now however there's a dearth of dog walkers, there's no ball games and those people who are out there (all five of them) are keeping so far apart that they couldn't even have a shouted conversation with each other, let alone a passing "Hello!" Even the children's play park at the far end of the field is cordoned off with what looks like crime scene tape. The whole area looks sad and a little bit 'Marie Celeste'. (Not quite because that was completely deserted, but you get the picture).

This wretched Covid-19 virus has affected all of our lives in one way or another and will continue to impact us for some months to come, it seems.

So, unless you've just awoken from the sleep of a lifetime or perhaps just returned from your annual holidays on the moon, you'll be aware that in an effort to do our bit to stem the spread of this awful virus, all of WAM's training and social gatherings have been cancelled until

further notice. When they'll restart is anybody's guess.

However you'll be pleased to hear that the Committee haven't been idle during this crisis and continue to swap information and ideas regularly by email, WhatsApp and various other messaging services and will continue to 'meet' at our regular bi-monthly Committee Meetings thanks to the wonders of modern technology and the administrative skills and technological nounce of David Walton, who's organised us with video conferencing. (21<sup>st</sup> century or what?!!)

So with our next Committee Meeting scheduled for Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May at 7:30pm, if you have any issues or queries (especially now) that you'd like raised with the Committee then please send details to our Group Secretary, David Walton ([sec@wessexam.uk](mailto:sec@wessexam.uk)) for inclusion on the Agenda. As always, he, or the respective portfolio holder will get back to you as soon as we can with an answer to your issue/query.

I know Andrew will already have mentioned this in his Chairman's report but it is worth reiterating, just like IAM RoadSmart and other





groups and organisations around the country, the WAM Committee will continue to monitor the briefings and advice coming out of No. 10 and the Department of Health with the aim of getting our training and social activities calendar back up and running again just as soon as it's absolutely safe to do so.

In the meantime, in lieu of our monthly meetings at Hatch Beauchamp, David Walton, in his guise of Newsletter Editor, will be publishing a short monthly 'bulletin' sometime around the middle of the month. His first one has already gone out to the membership but if, for whatever reason you haven't received your copy, then please email him at [ed@wessexam.uk](mailto:ed@wessexam.uk) and let him know.

In February, before Covid-19 took hold, we were fortunate enough to have Kara Frampton of St. Margaret's Somerset Hospice Volunteers come along to give us a very short, but very insightful talk about the history and work of this wonderful local institution. And very well received it was to. For those of you who were unable to attend, if you have the chance to hear Kara talk at some other club or event, then you really should make the effort pop

along. As I say, it's a short talk, but very well given and very, very informative.

With the restrictions placed on us by the advent of Covid-19, obviously you won't be able to offer your usual support to St. Margaret's. This is mainly because all of their shops and outlets are closed, but also for some time to come, you won't see their army of volunteers out rattling their collection tins at local supermarkets and street fairs etc. either. If you would like to continue to donate or perhaps find other ways that you can help during this time of 'lock-down', then please look at their websites.

For their emergency appeal: [www.st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/emergency-fund](http://www.st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/emergency-fund)

For virtual fundraising tips and ideas: [www.st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/help-from-home](http://www.st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/help-from-home)

As I mentioned in the April bulletin, our Guest Speaker for March was to have been Roger Weeks of Diabetes UK. Roger was the first of our Guest Speakers to become a casualty to the Covid-19 restrictions. Happily he's been kind enough to rearrange his talk with us and is now scheduled to come and speak to us on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March next year instead.





I've also been in touch with John Frosdick our April 1<sup>st</sup> Aid speaker and Steve Greenhalgh of Somerset Road Safety who was to have joined us in May with his Driving Simulator equipment. Like Roger, John and Steve have been kind enough to rearrange their visits to April and May next year. My grateful thanks to the both of them.

Come on, be honest, you're starting to see a pattern forming here, aren't you?!

The fact is that although I probably should cancel all of this year's speakers en-masse, my plan is to contact each one a month before their scheduled talk, either to say it's off (no change in the Covid status) or because things are getting back to normal, they're still on! That way I'm hoping we can maintain at least a semblance of the Events Calendar should the restrictions placed upon us by Covid-19 be withdrawn sooner rather than later. I doubt it, but I can at least hope!

As you've probably gathered, each speaker I postpone will be offered the same slot in one year's time so that we can have a rolling calendar of events up and ready to go. Well, that's the theory, at least!

The one thing I can say with almost absolute certainty is that our scheduled speaker for the October AGM, Mike Quinton, IAM RoadSmart's CEO, will not now be joining us. He hasn't actually told me that he won't be joining us, you understand, but having suddenly announced his resignation from IAM RoadSmart in March, to take effect in August, I think it's a pretty sure fire bet that he won't be joining us at Hatch Beauchamp in October!

But fear not gentle reader because if life has got back on track by then and we are able to have a proper AGM – you know, in the hall with real live people sitting next to each other and Alice and Rene et al. providing the tea – then I already have another, really interesting (and non-IAM) speaker in mind. Watch this space!

With regards to the Volunteer Register; with all local and national events being cancelled throughout the country, clearly I won't be contacting any of the Volunteers for the foreseeable future as originally planned. As soon as I know more, I'll be in touch.

As I understand it, the current 'lockdown regulations' will be in force now until at least June. That being the case our two main events







of the year; June's 'Car Skill's Night' and July's 'Classic car Show' have been cancelled. The truth is that with the current restrictions continuing for so long the chances of us getting anything up and running in the ever shortening time frames will be neigh on impossible.

Obviously I was hopeful that all of the virus problems would be over by then and that we'd be able to hold these events as planned, but sadly that's not going to happen. I appreciate that this is nothing more than should be expected in this time of national crisis, but the cancellation of two really good nights is a disappointment nevertheless.

If nothing else it will give our esteemed President, Brian Howe, another year to do his best Gollum impression as his jealously guards his Car Skills winner's trophy from last year.



Well, short and sweet I know, but to be honest, because of all of the necessary restrictions that are in place because of this wretched virus, that's about it from an 'events' perspective for this ¼ but believe me, as soon as I have something more concrete to tell you, you'll be the first to know.

But here's a couple of things I thought I'd share with you.

### **There goes the neighbourhood!**

For the last few years we've had a variety of wild birds using our garden for nesting. Generally we have Blackbirds, but we have had a pair of House Martins and several pairs of the common Sparrow using our facilities. You can imagine my surprise then when about a week ago a couple of Wood Pigeons moved in. Over the years we've lived here my wife and I have actively discouraged pigeons from even entering the garden, let alone take up residence here!

But this sneaky pair clearly chose a time when we were isolating in the house as opposed to isolating in the garden, because if I'd known what they were planning it would never have happened! But the fact is they're here and I wouldn't dream of evicting them now. (And before somebody mentions the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, I'm aware that now they are here, they have squatter's rights and can't be moved).

The thing is, they didn't choose to nest at the far end of the garden or around the back of my





garage where they'd have more privacy as you'd expect, but chose instead to park themselves in the bush right outside of my kitchen window. At the time of writing they've been there about a week now.

They're a funny pair that we've nicknamed Walter and Martha. Funny because they always seem to be at loggerheads. He busies himself with providing nesting material and, presumably food, whilst all she seems to do is to harangue him every time he shows his beak!



I gather that pigeons are monogamous, so our Walter must sometimes wonder why he didn't choose a different bride because by golly doesn't she grumble?! We often hear her when we're sat on the patio, just feet away from her nest. She makes a sort of grunting and rumbling sound in her chest. It's really quite loud. Clearly she's not a contented wife and soon to be mother so it's no wonder to me that Walter tends to stay away!

At first, every time I went out onto my drive she got alarmed and flew off in a huff. Presumably before she laid her eggs, but she seems to have become used to my comings and goings now and just sits quietly as I go about my daily life.

I've read that once they inhabit the nest, the female waits a couple of days before laying her first egg and that usually, she'll have a clutch of two which she'll incubate for about 18 days. After that the chicks will leave the nest on the 25<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> day. That means they should be in and around my garden until early June sometime. I'll let you know in the June bulletin how they're getting on.







With regards to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, I thought I'd share with you a couple of articles that I'd read. I found them interesting, perhaps you will too. The first is from WHICH? (the consumer organisation). In short 'WHICH?' say they have rounded up the key information that they feel you need to know to help protect yourself and others from Covid-19. [www.which.co.uk/news/2020/03/coronavirus-how-you-can-protect-yourself/](http://www.which.co.uk/news/2020/03/coronavirus-how-you-can-protect-yourself/)

Now, even though WHICH? is a reliable source, bearing in mind the daily briefings coming out of Number 10, I strongly urge you to **ONLY** follow current Government/Dept of Health advice and guidance and that you should make up your own mind on the veracity of any article that is not published by them.

Courtesy of the IAM's 'INFORM' I also found a couple of links to the National Trading Standards UK (NTS) about scams and scammers and thought they would be worth sharing.

Sadly, but not at all unexpectedly, even in these times of national crisis, scammers; thieves; crooks and others of ill repute are still active preying on the anxious and the

vulnerable. As a way of trying to keep us safe from falling foul of these awful people, the NTS Scam Teams are warning people to remain vigilant after a "notable rise in coronavirus-related scams seeking to benefit from the public's concern and uncertainty over COVID-19".

[www.nationaltradingstandards.uk/news/beware-of-covid19-scams](http://www.nationaltradingstandards.uk/news/beware-of-covid19-scams)

If you haven't heard of them before (and I certainly hadn't) 'Friends Against Scams' is a NTS Scams Team initiative. They aim to protect people and prevent them from becoming victims of scams. So, supplemental to the 'Covid-19 scams' I mentioned above, I thought I'd also point out that 'Friends' have published their own e-learning tool about the fight against scams.

Now as I say, I'd never heard of them before so clearly I'm not a member nor am I advocating that you should suddenly rush out and sign up to become a 'Friend'; but to my mind they do have some really useful advice to offer on their pages that you may find of interest and worth a read.

[www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/training/friends-elearning](http://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/training/friends-elearning)





If you find any of the information useful or enlightening, perhaps you could share it with your elderly and possibly vulnerable family members, friends and neighbours? Knowledge is power, they say, and hopefully if more people have an idea of how these vile criminals work, we may, in some small way, help to stamp out the activities of these most detestable people for good. (Or at least make a dent in their ill-gotten profits!)

Well that's the "Public Service Broadcast" over so now back to Eventy type stuff. The other day I was given the book 'Games from Childhood' and in there I found a couple of really long forgotten pen and paper games for two or more people that might ring a bell with you. There were some familiar games to me such as Battleships; Hangman; Noughts and Crosses etc. plus a whole pile that I'd never heard of before such as Five Squared; Crossed Words; 3 Men's Morris and Bulls & Cows.

The book gives very precise instructions on each game so if you'd like to know the rules to any of these games, just drop me a line and I'll send them through.

Alternatively, if you find yourself at a loose end and would like to catch up with news about either IAM RoadSmart (IAMRS) or the group then have a look at our respective websites.

For IAMRS:

[www.iamroadsmart.com](http://www.iamroadsmart.com)

[www.facebook.com/IAMRoadSmart](https://www.facebook.com/IAMRoadSmart)

For WAM:

[www.wessexam.uk](http://www.wessexam.uk)

[www.facebook.com/wessexam](https://www.facebook.com/wessexam)

If you have any ideas or suggestions you'd like to see added to our Facebook page, then have a word with Brian Howe our Facebook Administrator. You can get him on [president@wessexam.uk](mailto:president@wessexam.uk)





And just one more thing before I sign off. I'd like to take the opportunity to give David Walton, our Group Secretary etc. a special word of thanks.

I've mentioned David a few times in this and other reports that I've made over the last few years. For those of you who don't know him, he's the quiet bloke who operates the projector on Member's Evenings. But he is much, much more to the group than just his 'public face' behind the projector.

He is the font of all knowledge of the myriad rules and regulations that govern us and someone who works tirelessly behind the scenes to make sure that the committee is as effective as we can possibly be, perhaps even more so during this time of crisis. To my mind he is the unsung hero of WAM and I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank him for all the hard work that he does on behalf of the Committee and therefore, the Group.

Thank you David, you're a star!



If there was a Vice Chairman's award, you'd definitely win it, but as there isn't you can have a virtual lollypop instead.

||

Well there you have it. As always, thank you for taking the time to read my scribbling's I hope you find some of my suggested reading material useful. Remember, if you do have to be out and about driving, please be ever vigilant. With our roads being less busy now, other road users may not exhibit the same care and attention as they normally would!

Until the next time, stay safe, stay well.

*Barry*

Vice Chairman & Events Co-ordinator.

[events@wessexam.uk](mailto:events@wessexam.uk)





## BREAKING NEWS

Wearing a mask inside your home is now highly recommended. Not so much to prevent Covid-19 but to stop eating.

Corona beer changes their name to avoid association with the Coronavirus outbreak



## A Note from a Satisfied Customer

*On Friday 14<sup>th</sup> February I took my IAM test and passed with a FIRST. I decided to take the test after acquiring three speeding tickets in the space of five days in June 2018. At the time I was driving a fast hire car (no excuse I know!) after my car was off the road for 4 months following a hefty collision. The accident was not my fault and my insurers acknowledged this and made a full settlement. However, I started to think about my own driving and at the age of 58 decided I needed some re-training. Thankfully my designated observer was David Walton and I owe him a great debt of thanks for getting me test ready. He showed patience, perseverance and just the right amount of discipline to iron out my many faults and it is in no small measure down to him that I passed. Many thanks and good luck to anyone else soon to take their test.*

*Ed Jones  
Sparkford*



# Scent Training

By Pauline Wills

*I registered with Scentwork UK and entered our first trial scheduled for Good Friday, 10 April 2020. Wellington was the venue. Ideal, I thought, as it was local and I wasn't keen to stay away from home. I may tell you about that experience another day.*

*There are 10 levels within Scentwork UK so Ceri and I have a lot to learn. To pass a level 1 trial a dog and handler team must complete 3 out of 4 searches successfully. Each search involves finding one scented article within 3 minutes. The search areas are:*

- tables and chairs*
- vehicle*
- boxes and luggage*
- exterior*

*One good reason for me choosing Scentwork is that trials can be done on*

*lead. Each dog competes in turn in an enclosed space away from the others. That not only prevents them from seeing where the scented article is hidden but it also eliminates a lot of distractions. (You may recall the Hoopers scenario in my first story!) In turn that makes handling much easier which means I can enjoy it too. Our first trial had to be cancelled of course.*

*Scentwork is the best type of training we have attempted so far. The tasks are varied and Ceri really focuses on every one. I'm quickly getting to grips with WhatsApp and I find the group extremely useful. We can work whenever we feel like it. The flexibility suits me very well - and it's motivating to see the others progressing too.*

*I mentioned that being on lead makes handling easier but that is not always the case.*







*When we were in the village hall training together we practised a search with a table and chairs. The scent is never placed out of reach of the smallest dog. It was my turn first and so I walked around the table encouraging Ceri to stay with me. I forgot that the scent would be circulating freely; it wasn't sticking to my path! Suddenly she caught a whiff and made a beeline for it, her lead was taut and the chairs were displaced; luckily the table stayed put ... anticipation and a quicker response required on my part in future.*

*The first scent used for training is that of cloves. The only things necessary to make a start are a small piece of material, a glass jar with a lid, a container with holes in it and a few cloves of course. The material will take up the scent after a short while.*

*Jo comes up with all sorts of tasks for us to practise and gives us plenty of feedback.*

*Our first task on WhatsApp was to hide the material amongst a collection of items scattered on the floor. This would give the*

*dogs the confidence to walk over unfamiliar textures as well as things that move and others that they use in a different context. So I set about collecting them. I chose the towel that Ceri uses to wipe her feet, the step that she normally stands on, the box that she climbs into and a soft toy; she loves playing. She understood my 'cloves' command and didn't offer any other behaviour except resting her chin. [Video 1](#). Jo suggested putting the things closer together so we had another go and added more items including a kneeling mat and a wobble board. She avoided as many of them as she could so we will try that again one day. [Video 2](#) and [video 3](#). As I turned around to stop the camera after our third attempt she came back indoors and pinched the piece of material; I found her out on the lawn chewing it... that's another thing I must remember.*

*Earlier in the year Jo mentioned a vehicle search on several occasions but each time the weather was so atrocious that we couldn't*







attempt it. Now it is beautiful and here is our chance. Our first few efforts were with food. Lovely sticky cheese! [Video 4](#). Her confidence was growing all the time. [Video 5](#)

So after the cheese it was time to have a go with the scent. Oops, looking at the videos I have just noticed that I didn't clean the car very well. Anyway, Ceri was shut in the back garden each time I hid the material just in case she tried to peek! I started with an easy one and placed the material behind the bottom corner of the number plate. [Video 6](#). Next time it was a bit further away on top of a rear tyre. Notice how she went to the number plate first but soon found a stronger scent. [Video 7](#). Finally I put the material at the front of the car and she headed straight for it - she's a good little sniffer dog! [Video 8](#).

It is important that Ceri's indication is strong so that was the next thing for us to

practise. In this video I am holding a pot containing some cloves. [Video 9](#). Practising with more than one pot ensures that she is not guessing so here I am using two similar pots, one containing cloves and the other one empty. [Video 10](#). I should be trying to distract her too but my hands are full. Dog training can be quite a challenge.

Well, Ceri's making good progress but once again I am struggling with technology. I can see the new videos on my mobile and I know where they are stored but if Smart Switch doesn't recognise them then I can't transfer them. I must be missing something. As we are now facing three more weeks of lockdown there will be time for me to reflect on that problem.

Today Jo sent our new challenges for the week but I haven't tackled last week's yet. We'll have fun catching up and then there will be plenty more joys to share.





# Man of Calibre

By Andrew Griffiths

Before lockdown, I had a longstanding desire to buy an air rifle. I'd bought an air pistol 40 years ago but in the move from Surrey to Somerset 8 years ago, it mysteriously went missing.

My interest in guns goes way back as this story explains. It sets the scene for my contribution to the next Bulletin in May.

When I was in my 20s, I decided -in a moment of madness- to join the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve (TAVR). It's now called the Volunteer Reserves. So at the end of **1981**, I enlisted with the Royal Corps of Transport (and that's now called the Royal Logistics Corps).

So what happened in early **1982**, a short while after joining? Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands and PM Margaret Thatcher despatched an Armed Forces Task Force to the Falklands in response...and I spent some very sleepless nights panicking, after all, I'd only just finished basic training at the RCT depot in Grantham!

But phew, it was the regular soldiers who were mobilised and the TA was in reserve just in case they need our expertise (as if).

"My" RCT unit was attached to 221 Field Ambulance RAMC; that's what I liked about the Army, loads of acronyms and abbreviations to get lost in! Royal Army Medical Corps.

While primarily my role was driving military vehicles to move troops, supplies, medics, equipment, casualties etc, I was first and foremost a soldier and as such was required to be fully trained –and that included weaponry. And so it was that Driver Griffiths ("Driver" was a my official rank) took to the firing ranges with a 7.62mm SLR (self-loading-rifle), some months later progressing onto the 7.62 LMG (Light Machine Gun... but let me tell you that there was **nothing** light about it as I was to find out when I was selected for the Unit competition gun team and earning the title of Gunner Griffiths). So 7.62mm was the calibre of my rifle – hence the title of this article.





## On The Range

On the first occasion, the RSM (ok... Regimental Sergeant Major), was in charge of the periodic qualifying tests on the firing range at Pirbright, Surrey. We were firing at what was called a Figure 11 target (right) from 600 yards (and then from 400, 300, 200 100 yards). When we'd fired 10 rounds at the target, we had to run (why?) those 600 yards to see how well we'd done. The RSM noted that there was only 1 bullet hole in my target – where had the other 9 rounds gone? I explained – in jest – to the RSM that the other 9 must have all gone through the same hole.

That cost me 20 push-ups from the RSM and a mouthful of expletives from my Sergeant who I'll call Jeff (because that was his name). I subsequently discovered that when wearing the Queen's badge (ie on their beret), Officers did not to swear... they shouted a lot, but didn't swear. That rule seemed not to apply to NCOs (Non-Commissioned Officers)... well to Jeff at least. Those were really good days; the camaraderie was brilliant and we all had one motto which was "**Never Volunteer (again)**". I know mottos tend to be in Latin but we had enough trouble with Queen's English.



*Left; Figure 11 target. 44 inches tall, 17 inches wide but nigh-on invisible at 600 m!*

### Stop or I'll shoot!

Another occasion worthy of mention is the night I shot my Commanding Officer (CO). He too was a volunteer and a Colonel; his full-time job was an NHS surgeon. Anyway, 221 Field Ambulance RAMC was on weekend manoeuvres in the middle of an insect-infested forest and at some unearthly hour of the morning (3am?) I was "on stag" which meant it was my turn to be the "eyes and ears" of my comrades in the camp, while they got some sleep. In the darkness to which my eyes had become adjusted, I saw something moving towards me and I gave the default order "Halt", followed by "advance slowly and be recognised".





The figure moved to within 10 ft of me. I could now see it was my CO and he was clearly checking that firstly I was still awake and that secondly I would be following a statutory procedure to deal with the situation - which was known as a challenge-response. So, I gave the challenge (the first part of a two-part codeword for that hour) and awaited his response. **Nothing**... not a murmur, So I gave him the challenge again and... **nothing**. **So I shot him**, on the basis that firstly he had failed to give any response and therefore could have been an enemy spy and that secondly, he was the CO and he had it coming anyway!

I was shortly promoted to Lance Corporal - and a few months later to Corporal 😊 so I must have been doing something right and I guessed that shooting the CO must have ticked some boxes with the other Officers on the promotion panel. By the way, all ammunition on field exercises was blank; live ammunition was **only** used on firing ranges under strict control.

### Operation Lionheart

When I was promoted to Sergeant, one of the most enjoyable experiences was qualifying as

a UBRE driver/operator. I'm sure you all know what a UBRE is (pronounced "yewbree"). Okay, I'll tell you anyway; **Unit Bulk Refuelling Equipment**. There! So simply put, it's a fuel tanker but it would be too simple for the Army to call it that. My role (along with my co-worker) while on exercise "Operation Lionheart" in Germany was to keep every vehicle in 221 Field Ambulance RAMC fully fuelled... and there were a lot of vehicles. This meant driving the tanker (almost always through the night) some 150 - 200 miles to a field fuel storage unit to fill its storage tanks (1 diesel, 1 petrol) and then return to replenish ambulances, land rovers, HGVs etc. and then drive through the night again to a fuel depot (which would have relocated since our previous visit) and repeat the whole exercise. All done bearing my SLR!

As some light relief, Jeff and I took an ambulance out on a detail. I was driving along a main road when ahead we saw the aftermath of a very recent collision directly ahead and in our path. The Police were already there and, seeing our vehicle bearing big red crosses, a Police officer flagged us down. Jeff shouted "don't \*\*\*\*\* stop! Turn around!" So I did a quick 3-point turn (that's what it was called in





those days and I did it in 3 too, very quickly). It's not everyday that an ambulance is seen turning around and driving away from the scene of a collision. But that's what we had to do, because, notwithstanding the fact that neither of us were fully-trained medics, had we attended and the casualty had subsequently died as a result of the collision, we would have been implicated and subject to German law. Jeff nor I could speak German (or Latin of course) but we were masters of our own language ... well \*\*\*\*\* sort of.

The whole 2 weeks involved a tremendous amount of driving and to say we were exhausted would be an understatement. But exhausted we were. While driving back in a very long convoy to the ferry port for return to UK, I became aware that the autobahn was getting quite "bumpy". Unusual for an autobahn, I thought, but the convoy ahead of me and behind me didn't seem to be having any problem. Then we hit a rut and I woke up and stopped hallucinating only to see the convoy on the autobahn some  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile to my left. Between me and it, there were just fields. I steered towards their lights and was now aware that I'd been driving across a field and it

took a good few minutes to rejoin the convoy. Very quickly, I was pulled over by my Sergeant, Jeff driving his land rover; more expletives! Where was my co-driver whose job was to keep the driver awake? He'd been flung into the passenger floor-well only to carry on with his deep sleep.

So Sergeant Griffiths had fallen asleep at the wheel of a fuel tanker and had veered off the autobahn, across some fields before waking up and calmly steering towards the autobahn as though nothing had happened. Lucky for me, there were no fences or brick walls involved but there were ditches to mark boundaries... the tanker had simply carried on over them bumping up and down like a kangaroo! If only I'd known about commentary driving back then... it is one of the ways to avoid nodding off at the wheel.

I left the TA after 5 or so years because the arrival of my children and a change in occupation no longer made it appropriate or workable.

So that, in a nutshell, resulted in my buying an air rifle in February and next time in our Bulletin, I'll let you know how I've got on... without Jeff here to shout at me.







# I will survive - with apologies to Gloria Gaynor

At first I was afraid, I was petrified,  
There was no loo roll down at Aldi and I nearly cried.  
Oh I spent so many nights just thinking how you did me wrong,  
I used to wipe,  
And now I'm forced to just drip dry!

No anti-bac! No bloody soap,  
and if you think you're buying pasta well you've got no bloody hope!  
I would have bought that box of eggs,  
I would have rationed out my bread,  
If I'd have known for just one second everyone would lose their head!

Go on now go, walk out the door!  
All you bloody stockpilers,  
You're not welcome any more!  
Weren't you the ones who just bought all the sodding beans?  
You selfish gits! I hope you spill them down your jeans!

Oh no not I, I won't panic buy!  
Oh as long as I have alcohol, I know I'll stay alive,  
Though I can't buy my usual cheese,  
This will not bring me to my knees  
And I'll survive, I will survive, hey, hey!







It took all the strength I had not to fall apart,  
There was just apples and one carrot in my shopping cart,  
And I spent hours walking round just feeling sorry for myself,  
The empty store, with boxes strewn across the floor

And you'll see me, somebody who,  
Cannot buy anything she came for, and it's all down to fecking you  
And frickin Reg from down the road is such a selfish blimmin git  
Because he stockpiled all the loo roll so nobody else can have a s@\*t!

Go on now go, walk out the door!  
All you bloody stockpilers,  
You are not welcome any more!  
Weren't you ones who just bought all the sodding cakes?  
Can't you make a crumble?  
Do you people not know how to bake?

Oh no not I, I won't panic buy!  
Oh as long as I have alcohol, I know I'll stay alive,  
Though I can't buy my usual cheese  
This will not bring me to my knees  
And I'll survive, I will survive!





# A TOUCH OF ZEN

By Nigel Albright; the full article referred to in 'Minding the Mind' in the April bulletin

Two areas so little written about, if at all, in advanced driving are mental fitness and mind-set, yet these are probably two of the most important elements for better, safer, driving behaviour.

## MENTAL FITNESS

It often comes as a shock to new associates to find just how much attention is needed to ensure they are not missing anything which could threaten their safety. Conversely, that can also highlight just how much attention has not been given before to this crucial aspect. Many drivers merely seem to respond to what falls into their sight line instead of actively looking for potential threats to their safety. For this reason their *threat perception* is low and they could easily miss something of vital importance. Good threat perception needs a consistently high level of concentration and awareness because potential threats to our



safety will not always be in plain view and could happen at any time. Therefore, low threat perception means a higher vulnerability to crashes and vice-versa. Two of my favourite phrases in commentary are, 'Looking out for areas of potential conflict in order to avoid them' and 'What you can't see can hurt you'. In essence the clues are always there and the right level of concentration avoids the black hole of, 'I didn't see it coming', which is often also used as the basis of the Mk1 get-out phase, 'we're only human'.

The concentration needed can initially be very draining for a new associate but, as he or she progresses the capacity to concentrate at a higher level and for longer periods improves, which can be equated to developing mental fitness. If you go to the gym it will take time to build up sustained fitness and, in a way, the brain is no different. Most advanced drives for group associates last maybe an hour or so but, for example, on an HPC drive you would





sometimes be out for a whole day, albeit with breaks along the way. To sustain the highest level of concentration over long periods takes time to develop until it becomes a completely natural and easy thing to do. And, of course, concentration is integral with observation and planning.

## THE ZEEBRUGGE EFFECT

In understanding mindset it is important also to appreciate the influences in the road safety industry; what they are, and why. To understand that we, need start back at the Zeebrugge Ferry Disaster of 1987. This event horrified the nation with the tragic death of 193 people, most dying from hypothermia in the hull of the stricken vessel. The results of the inquiry and following legal action firmly placed responsibility on companies to ensure their employees had sufficient training for their jobs. This also meant that employees involved in road crashes could claim that they hadn't had suitable training and hence the evolution of the now massive fleet driver training industry. This and the general publicity greatly escalated the interest in road safety and possibly stimulated the licencing of driving instructors in 1998 and introduction of the Driving Standards Agency in 1990. Whilst there

had been academic interest in road safety and crash analysis before Zeebrugge, afterwards there was the dawning realisation that road safety was a very untapped seam of gold, bearing in mind that written papers can be a substantial part of an academic CV. This awareness effectively became a turning point in the more specific interest in driver behaviour which was then obviously ripe for the picking and became a defined subject, subsequently with an associate professorship connected with it. The academic interest had a major impact in the way the subject is viewed within the now massive road safety industry, which largely thrives on the bad aspects. As such driver behaviour has become a complex and substantive subject, generally being approached from top down i.e. crash – reason for crash – driver attitudes then driver behaviour and there it normally stops. There is good commercial value running courses on driver behaviour and associated elements with numerous companies, and at least two universities, vying for a slice of the cake. Amazingly, at least one business is offering a qualification after just a one day classroom course. As each seeks to impress potential clients with its multiple features my impression





is that in general they do not address the core issue and, therefore, it is possible they don't actually understand what it is.

In the proper advanced driving sector, we do not need to get into the competitive zone of vying for peoples' attention so, by comparison, we can keep it simple and to the point. Additionally, we approach the subject from the bottom up, starting with mindset, because the right mindset determines attitude, which in turn, determines behaviour. A major benefit of this route in its simplicity is that, if done properly, it automatically deflects the bad attitude aspects.

## **ROADCRAFT**

The 1994 Roadcraft introduced a chapter on Becoming a Better Driver written by Dr Robert West, a Professor of Health Psychology but, with no apparent interest or awareness in driving standards per se. The first part was titled, The Mental Aspects of a Good Driver. It was just two short paragraphs totalling around 130 words but, crucially, there was nothing there about mindset. In the 2007 Roadcraft the first chapter became Mental Skills for Better Driving. The original submission for this part was written by an associate professor in driver behaviour with

credentials as long as your arm. My information is this was passed across the Hendon instructor on the then Roadcraft Working Party who promptly had it thrown out as being unsuitable in favour of the work of Dr Gordon Sharpe who had done some very successful work with the Scottish Police Driving School at Tulliallan Castle and who wrote the excellent book Human Aspects of Police Driving<sup>1</sup>, which was published to compliment the 1994 Roadcraft and aspects of which were incorporated into the 2007 & 2013 Roadcrafts.

Notice the pivotal point was the assessment of the Hendon instructor. This came as no surprise because, in my experience, the people who understood driver attitude and behaviour better than anyone else were the police driving instructors and mentors such as I knew back in the seventies and eighties. Through long experience their understanding of the subject was unparalleled, and this was long before the Zeebrugge event, to a point where they raised road driving to an art form with an unparalleled safety record. Indeed, it was quite impossible for them to do their work at sustained high speeds over maybe twenty or thirty years without a very clear understanding of what was good and bad in







driver attitudes and behaviour. This, in turn, led to their equally clear understanding of the right mindset; their safety depended on it.

At Police Driving Schools a driver could fail his or her advanced course because they did not have the right mindset, even though they could physically manage a vehicle very well. That is one reason why the courses were as long as they were and also why, after doing a Standard or Intermediate Course, drivers spent maybe a year operationally under the supervision of an officer with his or her advanced ticket before coming back to do the next course. Time and consistency are needed to establish and mature the right mindset. That is also one reason why, for example, after completing the High Performance Course, it might take another two years, with extra drives, progressing through the Honours and Silver levels to reach the coveted Gold standard. Learning the mechanical aspects of driving (System, positioning et al.) is, therefore, a relatively short term thing and some may get through civilian advanced courses on that basis, perhaps spending quite a lot of money in the process, much to the benefit of the businesses concerned. Such courses may last a day or two they think they have got it, little knowing that some of the real work would be ahead.

## WALKING THE WALK

So, why, in spite of all the academic work and large commercial interest have few if any, it seems, touched on the real criteria of the right mindset? My answer is that it seems important to have gone through the full and parallel progression of the skills and mental development to appreciate just how and why it is possible to reach a level whereby if you have a crash you are to blame in some way or another, either by causing the crash or, more importantly, by being in a position where you were vulnerable to it. That sort of understanding does not come out of a research lab or, a lecture room, nor is it understood by having a degree in psychology, for example. You have to have walked the walk and been inspired by the best you can find. It's a steady grind and progression; learning, practising, appreciating and maturing as you go. And when anyone has reached that level they will also properly understand about the mindset which goes with that ability. In other words, you won't know what you needed to know until you reach the top of the hill<sup>2</sup>. So, if you want to talk about driver behaviour, that is where one should start and that is exactly why the police driving instructors I knew had it so right. Most academics, and indeed most of those involved in





road safety, have probably never done anything more than a standard driving test and so, in my opinion, they will never properly appreciate the view from the top of the hill and that it is perfectly possible to reach a standard where by crashes are almost completely avoidable. That would also fit with the fact that in their research few, if any, have seemingly examined the history and experience found at police driving schools, which should obviously have been their first port of call.

From this you might understand why, in my opinion, it has generally led to a fundamental flaw in the academic understanding of the subject and the foundation on which good, safe, driver behaviour is actually built, whence it seems came the rejection of the original material for the mental skills chapter in the 2007 Roadcraft.

A further example was a university setup for examining overtaking, shown in a BBC1 Countryfile programme. This was indoors, with a Mini and a very large screen in front, but with no consideration for rear-view – so only half the picture and therefore potentially half the information for making a safe go or no-go decision. My guess is that they will also have done nothing more than the standard driving test

so would not have understood how to properly set up for an overtake. So, part of the problem was obviously not knowing what they did not know. You can imagine the time, effort and money involved in this set up, yet any assessment would have been flawed from the outset - and that for a university research project. That apart, you can have fun with simulators and they may have some value but not, I suggest, at the research or professional level unless somehow you can have a surround view or, at least, a representative view to the rear.

The 2013 Roadcraft has 22 pages in the chapter on Mental Skills for Better Driving, however, there is nothing there on mental fitness. Aspects of mindset are loosely touched upon on in p15 under Operational Stressors rather than as a core aspect.

### **THE RIGHT MINDSET**

So, what exactly is the right mindset in driving? Pat Forbes, a former Sergeant Advanced Wing Instructor at the Metropolitan Police Driving School, Hendon said, very succinctly and simply, that the temperament of a good driver involves, 'self-discipline and restraint', qualities so lacking in many drivers but which, if there





were more of these around today, the roads would certainly be measurably safer places. What we see in the need for self-discipline and restraint is also the need to take control of one's thinking because these aspects do not come naturally to most people. John Miles in his excellent book, 'Expert Driving the Police Way'<sup>3</sup>, wrote that, 'The most important thing in a motorcar is the driver's brain'. The human being is unique in that it has the ability to control the way it thinks and, therefore, its mind. Remember, behaviour is merely a physical manifestation of what's going on in the brain, therefore attitude determines behaviour and not, as some might argue, the other way around.

The two key elements of self-discipline and restraint are also reflected in the comment by Derek Van Petegem, who was another Hendon instructor. He said that, 'The art is knowing when to go slowly'. This introduces *proportional application*, which is dependent on having the right mindset at that moment. The right mindset achieves two things: Firstly, it enables the proper assessment of information in all circumstances, and secondly, it ensures the right proportional application of whatever action is taken, or not as the case may be.

## REMOVING THE BIAS

Most importantly we need what I call a neutral mindset. This is the state of mind which is calm yet highly alert and is capable of interpreting all information in its proper context at all times regardless of the circumstances or, the pressures of the day. This is vital for our safety. If, for example, we are setting up for an overtake and there is any bias in the thinking which could place the wrong emphasis or even interpretation on information that, in turn, could end in a fatal result. This leads to the understanding that negative or positive emotions can adversely affect judgement. They can also dominate logic and common sense, and that can be critical in driving. So, to have that control over the mind, we obviously need to exclude all thoughts not pertinent to the task. Interestingly, Buddha wrote, 'Rule your mind or it will rule you'. The ability to establish and maintain a state of mind is just that – a state of mind.

## THE PATH

Accepting that one needs a neutral yet highly alert mindset which is critical to good and safer driving practises is the first part but, keeping it there is what takes time and self-discipline,





and sometimes a lot of it. To explain think of cement – and this is going back to Pavlovian principles. Firstly, you mix the ingredients – that is introducing the brain to the components of that mind-set. Let us say, for example, self-discipline, restraint and calmness with total alertness and concentration. The mix is then poured into a mould. However, if the mould is removed before the concrete is set the structure will fall apart. This is the really crucial part which also consumes the most time. It equates to maintaining very consistent practice over a period so that the thinking becomes so ingrained that it is completely natural in all conditions. That is equivalent to the cement having become set. This is also why it can take maybe a year to get all aspects of driving and particularly the mindset properly imprinted in the brain and another year of consistent practice to get those so firmly ingrained that they become what psychologists call habituated. In other words so permanently fixed in the brain that they form a consistently stable mental platform from which all assessments and decisions can be properly made at all times.

Changing thinking to suit the job or task is not unusual. For jobs this often starts with an

induction course to develop the understanding of how we need to think and act in order to perform satisfactorily for that company. It is well known at the top end of sport it is often a mind-game and mental training is an integral part of the overall programme; those who keep their calm are often more likely to succeed than those who do not. Officer training at the Commando Training Centre, Lymington, for example, requires, amongst other things, ‘calmness under pressure’, which probably few have when they start their training. Call it brain conditioning, call it part of personal development, call it what you will but ultimately it all comes down to the same thing. The difference in driving is that you need the self-motivation to change the thinking and then maintain it consistently over an extended period of time.

That ‘calmness under pressure’ is also reflected in the best road drivers I have been fortunate enough to sit with. They all had an external calmness where nothing is rushed, even at high speeds. This is partly because they are looking and thinking so far ahead that they are giving themselves time to consider other options. It’s important to note that this





calmness is not swayed by any change in external circumstances as they drive along, enabling them always to keep a steady mind and the right focus on the job in hand. This calmness belies a hive of activity in the brain, reflected in what is known as the Swan complex; all calm and composition on the top but, paddling like hell underneath. Not perhaps the most elegant illustration but, I think it makes the point. The other reason they stayed calm was because they were never getting into tight situations, so always ensured they had space and time on their side<sup>4</sup>. All of this led to that wonderful old phrase, often favoured in police driving circles, of acting 'with deliberation'.

## **DELUSIONS OF SAFETY**

So why do most drivers not feel it is important to concentrate more? The main answer is that because of their low threat perception many do not recognise when they are in vulnerable situations or even if they have had a close call. This leads to a delusion of safety. Their criteria being that they are safe because they haven't had a crash<sup>1</sup> but, this does not account for their potential vulnerability to crashes so, if anything does go drastically wrong which could

either kill them or, in a sense at worst, leave them permanently disabled for life, they have no protection.

Five people still get killed daily in UK road crashes. Countless more end up with serious and or permanent injuries, often with permanent disabilities. Even so-called vehicle safety features don't save them. So, the best strategy is obviously to develop a skill set which vastly reduces their vulnerability in the first place and that can be done to a point where the possibility of crashes can be almost eliminated, given there is no 100% rule for anything. That skill set has two vital ingredients: the physical and the even more important mental one.

Nigel Albright

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<sup>1</sup> Human Aspects of Police Driving, 1977

Book Dr Gordon Sharp

<sup>2</sup> The Black The White and The Grey

Article The author

<sup>3</sup> Expert Driving the Police Way 1972

Book John Miles

<sup>4</sup> The Real Key to Safety

Article The author







**Closing date for the autumn 2020 edition of the Wessex Advanced Motorists e-Newsletter is 20<sup>th</sup> July.**

**All contributions would be very welcome.**

**All items should be sent to  
ed@wessexam.uk or  
by mail to David Walton at  
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