



THREE SPIRES

Lichfield Advanced Motorists

(Registered Charity 1027300)



Group Newsletter

Issue 49 Spring 2019

Curborough YOUNG DRIVER EVENT is ON for August 13th 2019!



Ah yes– the first one to was easy put up!

Could you volunteer to lend a hand on the day? Looks like we might need it!!

Read more inside.

Everyone who attended our 2018 event arrived with a look of trepidation on their face. An hour or so later, they departed with beaming smiles!

They had all learnt that driving is more than a "no-thinking A to B" journey, but comprises a complex process requiring concentration

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Chairman's Chat

By LAM Chairman, Nigel Rogers



Nigel Rogers, Chairman.

A belated welcome to 2019 and with it the cold and often dreary winter weather, which gives us a good excuse to get onto the t'internet or down to the Travel Agent and book a holiday somewhere warm!

My wife and I are looking forward to almost a month in Cyprus this year, which is an island we have visited many times and always "out of season". We visit when the weather is less than "scorchio" and folks of a certain young age have yet to turn the picturesque Ayia Napa into an "all night party town". In the early months of the year, Cyprus is just a mass of flowers before the sun dries everything to a crisp. Even the weeds are beautiful!

They drive on the left (mostly) and never stop at Pelican crossings even if the lights are on red, unless someone has taken their life into their own hands and is physically crossing the road. The same applies to crossroads controlled by traffic lights, where the majority obey the lights, but some "clever ones" creep across on red and if the risk of immediate death from other traffic is minimal, off they go. I have seen a Police car do that, so "Greek law" obviously applies here!

In the small village where we stay, we always look forward every year to seeing the chap on his 600cc motorbike and his mate on a trials bike. Over the years, they must have travelled lots of Km on the back wheel only whilst performing "wheelies" that seem to go on for a very long distance. Perhaps it is difficult to obtain new tyres for the front wheels, so travelling on a "mono-cycle" solves that problem? I have probably told you before that in many cases, a pair of flip-flops, shorts and T shirt form the essential safety wear. I do see an increasing number on scooters and bikes wearing the legally required crash helmet and suitable clothing and my assumption is that they have already learnt the hard way that human skin and bones do not particularly like concrete and tarmac.

Our 2019 season has kicked off with some fundamental and exciting changes to our modus operandi, particularly regarding our new Associates programme and internal training processes. I am confident that these changes, which will be ongoing, will see our Group becoming one of the best to be part of from the point of view of our Members and Associates. I wrote to you all in December to alert you to these changes and updates. Put simply, our new Associates now have a 10-observed drive programme with clear notes to say what they should do between drives. The programme time limit is 12 months, although we hope that some will take the "bull by the horns" and get to test within 3-6 months.

In thinking why we, as Advanced Drivers, actually bother to do what we do when 99% of the public do not, I have drafted an article for the local glossy magazine. I have no idea if my article will make it to print, but in researching some background information for the piece, I found myself shocked by the complacency the we as drivers and the Government have regarding the human cost of driving. My article was, in part, prompted by the future phasing out of the internal combustion engine and the topical matter of autonomous vehicles (AV's). In searching for comparisons between an event that shocked not only the UK but the world and the human cost of driving, I am afraid the terrible event that comprised the Grenfell Tower fire came to mind.

That event, the consequences of which are on-going, resulted in the tragic loss of life of 72 people and that, quite rightly, shocked and appalled everyone. But where is the shock and outcry I ask when we look at the official Department of Transport road casualty figures for 2017 and realise that the death toll on UK roads added up to 25 Grenfell Towers in 2017? Why is it an acceptable fact of life that almost 1,800 people lost their lives on UK roads in 2017?

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/744078/infographic-2017-annual-report.pdf

These awful figures are despite the ongoing improvement in vehicle safety features and road infrastructure.

We can add to that the IAM RS derived data which suggests that almost 95% of collisions are the result of driver error, yet has anyone found a driver out there who thinks they need additional training to drive their car or van safely? Drivers who have an Advanced qualification represent just 0.6% of the 34 million licensed drivers in the UK.

This puts into focus the other bit of news that has circulated around the media for months of the AV car crashes in the USA, the consequence of which sadly resulted in some deaths. If the “accepted cost of human driving” in the UK alone accounts for almost 1,800 deaths and 250,000 casualties per year (about twice the population of the Lichfield City parish), should we be even more appalled when the time comes and AV vehicles form the majority of cars on the road, resulting in, let’s say, the death of 20 people per year in total? Is it the case that “Joe public” have no idea of the human cost of the consequences of bad driving and therefore have nothing to compare against or is it the media who are so desperate for any “bad news”, be that accurate or not, to sell their wares?

What other activity can you think of that accounts for so much suffering and loss other than warfare? Yet we pass our basic driving test at age 17 or 18 and that’s apparently all the training we need for the rest of our lives behind the wheel.

On a lighter note, I am delighted to invite you to read the news and articles within these pages to reveal that as a direct result of the widely acclaimed success of our 2018 Curborough Young Drivers event, we are holding another one in August this year. Your support would be greatly appreciated, particularly those of you who can influence family members, colleagues and friends who expect to be taking driving lessons or will have passed their test by that time to sign up or attend.

Some of us attended a talk hosted by the Wolverhampton Group in January this year and I had the opportunity to chat with the IAM’s Young Driver Ambassador, Mr David Gallagher. He mentioned that where ever he goes in the UK, someone asks him about our Young Drivers event on the assumption that he arranged and organised it. They are amazed when he told them it was us!

The 2019 Events programme is being released and includes some diverse and very interesting visits. Don’t be shy! Look at the events posted onto our web site www.lamm.org.uk and the forms that will be on the table during our Fradley meetings and sign up for a few. Any member can put their name down the visit and you are welcome to bring non-IAM/LAM family and friends too, provided you list all of them in the booking form. Most of the venues have min/max Group numbers they can manage or need a certain number to offer us a discounted Group entry fee.

Your Committee are in almost continuous communication with our ASDM, Mr Steve Ellis and the IAM directly on a variety of topics. I am pleased to say that not only do we listen to the words coming from the IAM, but they seem to be very open to listening to us too. The result is that if we discover process glitches and things that could work better, we are not shy in letting the IAM know about them. Whilst mentioning the Committee, our “Data Protection guru” has almost completed a full assessment of our Group operation, including what we do with your membership details, what we store, what we make available strictly to those within our Group who need to know and how we dispose of old data. Procedures are in place and all those in our Group who deal with your data are informed and know what to do (and what not to do with it). My thanks for Derek for leading the way here and his work forms a “working documentary procedure” which will be referred to and updated as required.

Our Training Team are coming up with schemes to make sure that our delivery of RoadSmart training to our Associates is all top-notch, as you would expect.

That’s it for me. The garden needs digging, rooms need painting, cars need washing and goodness knows what else.

Safe driving!

Road

RAGE....



We have all come across road rage at some point in our driving lives. When it happens, it can leave you feeling intimidated and scared. But with a bit of planning you can prevent the situation altogether as no one sets off on a journey intending to have an argument with another driver, often the road rage is the culmination of a bad day. Richard Gladman, head of driving and riding standards, provides a few top tips about how to avoid being a victim of road rage, and what to do if it escalates.

If there's conflict between two parties, there's a likely chance you've both played a part. This doesn't mean you should react. Try to take yourself away from the problem – let the other driver go on ahead. Even if you feel wronged, letting the other party go will make no difference to the rest of your day

- Is someone being confrontational or aggressive? If so, don't make eye contact and don't react visibly. Try not to think about them so that the incident doesn't affect you afterwards
- If the other party is still being aggressive to you and you are in fear of your own safety, call the police
- If the other party approaches you in your car, can you drive away safely? If you can, consider doing so. But don't rush off and drive like the getaway driver in a film, or if you think the other driver is going to chase you. If they are chasing you stop in a busy public place and call help
- Do you have a passengers who can film any behaviour on a mobile phone? This will help in terms of evidence. Remember to include the registration number of the other vehicle involved
- Don't open your door, don't open your windows fully and don't start or get provoked into an argument, try to stay calm
- If you were at fault, admit it and apologise. It may be enough to diffuse the situation quickly. And do not do anything that can be interpreted as retaliation. Even if you weren't at fault, is the argument really worth it?

Hopefully by now the matter is over and you are driving away. Do acknowledge that this incident will have affected your behaviour. If you feel upset or emotional pull over and get some fresh air or walk around if you need to before resuming your journey.

Find some distraction like listening to the radio - move your mind deliberately onto something else – deliberately driving well would be a good example – but don't dwell on the incident.

Richard said: "Road rage does not affect everyone every day. If you're finding it is happening very often, you might want to think about how you engage with other road users.

"Unlike pedestrians walking towards each other; who can easily get a feel of what the other person will do, where they might go or the mood they're in, you have no such opportunities cocooned in your car." He concluded: "No-one need experience road rage, but it us up to each of us to ensure it stays that way."

"So it is important not to be antagonistic or obstructive, perhaps making a person already having a bad day boil over."

By Richard Gladman, IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards.

Catalytic Converters



Catalytic converters have been in the news lately, prompted by videos of some outrageously brazen thefts posted online. Catalytic converters have been fitted to petrol cars since the 1990s and to diesels since about 2001. They look a bit like an extra silencer fitted into the exhaust, where the catalysts instigate chemical reactions in the exhaust gas to get rid a lot of the harmful pollutants.

A catalyst is a substance which makes other chemical react without being affected itself and for cars, the substances are precious metals; platinum is the one most of us are familiar with, but rhodium and palladium are also used.

Like any commodity, precious metals rise and fall in price and at the moment the price is very high. The resulting potential rewards for scrap metals makes the scum on the fringes of society feel it's OK to steal the catalytic converter (usually known as the CAT) from other people's cars and sell them to equally anti-social scrap metal dealers. Unfortunately, stealing CATs is not hard, otherwise the imbeciles stealing them wouldn't figure out how to do it. They simply dive under the vehicle and use powered shears or a grinder to cut through the exhaust pipe either side of the CAT. The owner is then left with the inconvenience and cost of getting the car repaired.

Typically, a replacement CAT will cost somewhere between £300 and £500, but there could be two if the engine is a V4 or V6. Then the damage to the exhaust pipe will have to be repaired and the new CAT fitted. If you have comprehensive insurance it should cover this theft, but there is always the excess to pay and weighing up whether making a claim will simply boost your premiums next year.

There are some things we can do to deter theft; CAT protectors are available which clamp round the unit and attach it to the underside of the vehicle with a strong wire rope. They are a deterrent because at the very least they will take a lot longer to cut through, but they cost around £100 - £150.

Ask a garage to mark the CAT indelibly so it can be traced – engraving the car's number plate or VIN will help the police prove the CAT has been stolen if a scrap metal dealer is raided; otherwise there are no distinguishing marks and thieves or scrap dealers can claim they come from scrapped cars.

Manufacturers could also give some thought to the design of the exhaust; some vehicles have the CAT fitted in the engine bay where they are very difficult to access from underneath whereas others are child's play to get at.

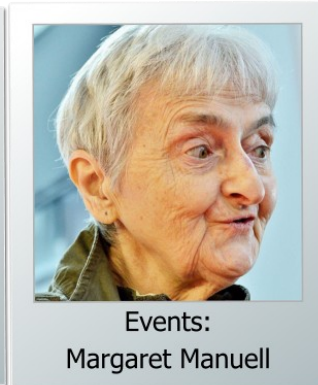
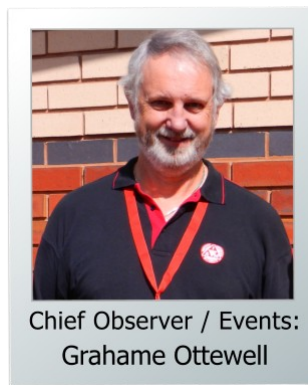
Vehicles with a high ground clearance are the most susceptible, because they don't have to be jacked up to get underneath, so vans and 4x4 cars are more at risk. Finally, if you see someone working suspiciously under a car, don't get directly involved; the thief is a thug with no conscience and a heavy tool in his hand, but do call the police and report it as soon as you can. If you've got dashcam footage of the theft, so much the better.

By Tim Shallcross, IAM RoadSmart head of technical policy

LAM Events

The last quarter of the year has been a busy time for our committee members.

We have been sorting out a lot of things including training, visits, data protection and the possibility of looking for funding for future events to name just a few.



Group Social Membership

Some of our committee and observers have been visiting other groups to share ideas and to keep updated with new things from IAM RoadSmart. One of the things I have noticed is that some groups do not always get the support for their events like we do.

We are introducing a new "Group Social Membership" for people who do not want to do the IAM RoadSmart test and all they have to pay is the "Group Social Membership" fee. They do not have to be a member of the IAM RoadSmart to be a " Group Social Member". That entitles them to come to our talks and visits and be a part of our group. If you have friends who do not want to become an IAM RoadSmart member then why not get them to become a Friend member of our group? They do not have to even be a driver!

Curborough Breakfast Meetings

October 2018 saw our last Saturday morning Curborough Breakfast Meeting for the year. These have been very useful to us for training purposes. Due to the kind hospitality of the Shenstone Car Club who own and run the Curborough Sprint Course, we shall be doing the same again during 2019. Anyone is welcome to come along for the breakfast and chat. But we can only do training for those observers and associates that we book in.

Breakfast Meetings are being held from 8.30am to 11.30am, Saturday mornings on the following dates:-

9th March, 13th April, 11th May, 15th June, 13th July, 10th August, 7th September and 12th October. Quite often there is a Sprint meeting on as well and you are welcome to watch for free. If you are into sprint meetings their membership is very good value and you can take your track car on the circuit. Please note that our meetings there are for a training drive out on the surrounding public roads, not on their circuit, sorry.

Committee Christmas Meal

The Christmas period covered our usual committee meal. This was organised by Margaret Manuell and we held this just before Christmas at the Schoolhouse Restaurant. The event is for committee members but where there are spaces we offer them out to those who have helped out the group during the year. We do pay for the full costs ourselves so your group money is very safe and under control of our very strict treasurer.

The Owl Group Buffet

We decided that we would arrange a social buffet for all members and guests of the Lichfield Advanced Motorists. Margaret did some research and this was arranged for Saturday 5th January 2019 at The Owl restaurant in Lichfield. We were filled to full capacity in no time at all. 36 people booked up which is the maximum amount of places we advertised due to the room size. Having a buffet and sitting at different tables meant that we could move around during the evening and chat to different people. The feedback (no pun intended) regarding the buffet was good. The staff were also very good to us and even provided foil wrappings for doggie bags so we could take the leftover food home. We shall be looking at doing a similar thing again.

Please bear in mind that it is still worth adding your name to the events list even if they are full. Sometimes, as was the case with The Owl we get someone who cannot come at the last moment.

Visit to Warwick Castle Wednesday 20th March

A visit to Warwick Castle was advertised via email and at the drive meetings. The date for that is March 20th and costs only £5.00 thanks to Margaret Manuell's excellent discount offer. As I write this there was just 2 tickets left. Contact Margaret for details.

Visit to JCB Rocester + Cream Tea Wednesday 1.00pm 17th April 2019.

Cost is £25 per person to include a JCB cream tea (a cake and drink) after the visit . Payment will be required at time of booking and refunds only if someone else pays and goes in your place. Please note the terms of the booking and visit as set out by JCB below.

General Visitor Information as supplied by JCB (T&C's):

During the JCB Factory Tour our visitors have unique opportunity to see the world famous JCB Backhoe loader production line. The visit involves entering a fully operational factory where Health & Safety is paramount and to ensure all our guest have a fantastic experience.

As the booking contact it is your responsibility to read through the following and communicate this to ALL visitors in your group. Cont. ...

The duration of JCB's Factory Tour is approximately 2 hours 30 minutes and covers nearly 3 miles therefore individuals with walking difficulties may find the tour unsuitable.

- JCB is a wheelchair friendly site, however your Tour Guide is responsible for the welfare of the entire group and as such, we ask anyone in a wheelchair to organise their own assistance within the group, if they are unable to manoeuvre themselves.
 - In order to participate in the Factory Tour, it is essential ALL visitors wear closed toe shoes (i.e. no sandals or flip flops). Failure to do so will result in the individual being unable to participate in the factory tour. JCB will provide all other PPE on site (Hi Viz, glasses & ear protection).
 - ALL visitors must be 15 years old or over
 - A short part of the tour requires guests to walk outside therefore appropriate clothing for the weather conditions should be worn.
 - NO photography is permitted during the factory tour, however is permitted in the Story of JCB.
 - Instructions by the Tour Guide are final and must be adhered to.
 - No food or drink can be consumed on site unless pre-booked as part of a Tour Package.
 - Please arrive as per the time on your confirmation timetable, there are no waiting facilities prior to your tour.
 - On arrival at the VIP Visitor Centre, each guest should state their event reference and/or the event name (as detailed in this email header).
 - There are no storage facilities for coats & bags on site so we advise guests leave any items they do not wish to carry around the tour in their vehicles.
- PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU WISH TO GO ASAP AS WE HAVE TO PAY UP FRONT TO RESERVE THIS VISIT.



Talk on the "National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme" by Alan Prosser

7.45pm for 8.00pm start Monday 20th May 2019 at Fradley Village Hall.

Alan Prosser is the head of IAM RoadSmart Driver Retraining.

Alan joined IAM RoadSmart from The TTC Group, providers of police and court-referred driving courses. He has over 38 years extensive experience in the driver education and casualty reduction industry including 20 years as a middle or senior manager in the public and private sectors, taking a strategic lead in the delivery, management and development of driver behavioural change programmes, including the NDORS programme.

Alan is instrumental in helping IAM RoadSmart, the UK's biggest independent road safety charity, strengthen its position in the driver retraining market, building on its success as an established provider in drink-drive rehabilitation programmes.

Please let me know if you are coming so that we can arrange seating plans. Other groups will also be invited to attend so number may have to be restricted if we reach the hall capacity.

Young Drivers Event Tuesday 13th August 2019 at Curborough Sprint Course

August 2018 saw us do our first large scale Young Drivers event at Curborough Sprint Course. The event was a big success and lots of pictures were displayed in the newsletter.

Curborough Sprint committee have offered us the use of their sprint course again for free. We have confirmed with them another Young Drivers event for Tuesday 13th August 2019.

We are setting up a subcommittee and plans are already in the pipeline.

We shall be looking for volunteers (could that be you?) to help us out on the day. We have formed a subcommittee and are now in the planning stages.

Do you know of anyone with a special vehicle for them to see and talk about, vehicle and road safety items, or event help with providing posters, leaflets, making signs or even a generator for power supply? Do you know anyone who might lend us a vehicle and trailer, party tent or gazebo? Sally Basketfield will be running a tombola stall so if you have any suitable prizes then please let her know. So there are lots of ways you might be able to help us out. We shall also be looking for young drivers to take part in this event. Under 26 year old and we can go down to 14 year olds. If you are able to provide any information or ideas for events on the day, finance or sponsorship for this event, contacts then please let us know.

If you have any events or ideas for events then please let Margaret or myself know. You are very welcome to arrange an event for us if you have contacts. Events contacts details ...

Grahame Ottewell grahame@lamm.org.uk

Margaret Manuell margaret@lamm.org.uk

Grahame Ottewell

Events

Do you have any ideas for Events?

Contacts for talks?

Would you like to organise a visit ?



Chief Observers Chat

Grahame Ottewell

Associate Advanced Driver Course

We are now using the IAM RoadSmart Advanced Driving Course in a new structured way. Whilst the Advanced Driver Course handbook is good we found it did not have an easy structure to follow. So, over the months leading up to Christmas, Geoff Russell , our new group "Training Officer" , and myself got together and formulated a new structure to run alongside the Advanced Driver Course book and put the new structure to the group committee. This was accepted.

Our new plan has been tested and found to give both the associate and the observer a plan to follow and help with targeted progress. The new structure is now being rolled out to all new associates. Feedback is very good. Not only that, Geoff and myself and John Russell had a meeting with our Area Service Manager Steve Ellis. We showed Steve our plan and he liked it. In fact he liked it so much he has taken away to show to other groups.

We are also applying part of the new structure to our current associates. This will be a drive assessment if they have done more than 6 drives / runs and a pre test at run 9. This is to fall into line with our new plan.

The idea of the plan is to keep us up to date with IAM RoadSmart requirements in both time-scales for associate membership and runs permitted by a group. We shall now be monitoring drives very closely.

We have also had a lot of associates put in for test. That will keep the examiners busy.

History has shown that over the whole of the country a lot of associates do not necessarily do the Advanced Driving Course and want to take the test. Lichfield Advanced Motorists can now cater for this in various ways.

If the test prospect is something a person is frightened of then our group is now authorised to take on the occasional none test route which is called "Group Sign Off". The associate must still reach the same exact high standard but can be signed off by certain qualified members of the group. They will get the IAM RoadSmart certificate but not quite the same certificate as a test pass with an IAM RoadSmart examiner.

They must advise IAM RoadSmart that this is the route they want before they pay and sign up for their course. They can, should they wish, revert to test later but currently not the other way round.

Group Certificate of Participation

Under our new group training plan we have also added another option. The associate can opt to accept that they have learnt what they came for and if they have improved their driving standards they can apply for a Lichfield Advanced Motorists group certificate of participation in the advanced driver course. Very few groups offer this but we are going to and we have IAM RoadSmart approval for that. At previous National Conferences they used to quote a figure of around 50% of associates not taking their tests. So we at Lichfield are offering this extra option. The Associate can then pay just the group annual fee to become a "Social" member of Lichfield Advanced Motorists and as such attend the meeting, events, visits and have an occasional drive assessment which is excellent value. If you want to know more then discuss with Sally Basketfield our Membership Secretary or speak to a committee member at the drives.

Local Observer Training

Geoff and myself are currently working on a training format for Local Observers. We want to try and streamline the training and also allow full members chance to look at what is involved in becoming an observer before they commit fully to registering with IAM RoadSmart for their course.

I will be contacting Curborough Sprint Course again to arrange us for us to use their breakfast Meetings again for our observer training during 2019. We also need associates for our training so keep your eyes peeled and take the opportunity of a drive from the Curborough Sprint Course. This is just a normal on road observed drive, not on the circuit, sorry.

I am often asked about when to apply the handbrake on a car. Handbrakes vary very much now from the old ratchet and pawl to electronic variation. Some handbrakes are operated by the feet, how does that work? I have found a very interesting and amusing article from one of the Area Service Delivery Managers namely Shaun Cronin which I have included in this newsletter and may help to explain things.

Grahame Ottewell Chief Observer

CONGRATULATIONS...

Advanced Pass

Alan	ROBERTS
Martyn	PROCTOR
Diane	RICHARDS
Dave	EVANS



Alan Roberts—Advanced Pass



Diane Richards - Advanced Pass

New Members

Calum	WILLIS
Eric	LUNT
Joanne	WOOLLEY
Eleanor	THOMAS
Chris	HOMER
David	HOMER
Tim	GREGORY
Keith	WILLIS
Mark	BATE
Keith	TEMPLEMAN
Paul	COCKRILL
Louise	PURKESS



Dave Evans—Advanced Pass



Martyn Proctor—Advanced Pass

Congratulations to Russell Bowen for obtaining his National Observers Certificate. Well done Russell!!!



Handbrake Application

When Shakespeare wrote Hamlet these first world problems didn't exist. Horse drawn carts had a rudimentary form of parking or handbrake to stop them rolling away, whilst you fed and watered the horse or left it parked overnight in your thatched and oak-beamed cart port.

As vehicle manufacturers realised that the ratchet and pawl type of handbrake hold was the way forward, I bet they wouldn't have dreamt of the hours of hot air that would pour from people discussing the only way to operate this simple device!

There was a time that vehicle manufacturers, driving instructors, advanced driving organisations and police driving schools were all on the same page, yes really. The only way to operate a handbrake correctly was to depress the release button first, pull it up firmly, release the button and hey presto the car then didn't move.

Well actually not so simple. The actuation of the handbrake was easy, but did it really do what it said on the tin? Not always as I found out at a very tender driving age when applying the handbrake on my first car, a 1967 Austin Mini, it was so pathetic you could drive the car with it applied!

Have you ever actually read your car handbook under the bit that tells you how to apply the handbrake? Of course not, how hard can it be - yank it on and job done right? Better still press the foot operated parking brake down or even just press the little button so electronically, magically and with some whirring the handbrake is on, if it has auto application you don't even need to touch it ... great, no more thinking about it then. Shall we move on now? Not just yet.

As a thinking driver we actually should concern ourselves and be thinking about doing a very simple thing like applying the handbrake. The thinking driver would also leave it in gear (manual gearbox) or park (auto gearbox), we might even turn the wheels to the kerb all as suggested in The Highway Code and other driving publications, because we are aware of the outside chance of what is known as a 'roll away.'

VOSA have completed extensive research on this subject and Loughborough University published a comprehensive study. Why? Because people have been killed as a result of a vehicle rolling away when the handbrake does not engage correctly. Now that is serious.

As a man I consult the manual after extensive fiddling and not getting the result I was initially hoping for. Sound familiar? Well time for a bit of RTFM then. RTFM – a simple expression that asks you to 'Read The Flipping Manual' or words of broadly similar meaning. Many vehicle manufacturers now recommend that you do indeed commit what many believe is that sacrilege known as ratcheting the handbrake.

In simple terms we are just not used to it, back in 1950/60/70/80 some things we were taught to do it the right way – the only way. Thankfully, times have moved on and so have the materials used in the manufacture of handbrake mechanisms, so often cited as the reason why we used to always depress the button first.

So here is my challenge to you – read your vehicle manual. You will be surprised just how many vehicle manufacturers actually advise you to not depress that button first and want you to ratchet their mechanism. As 'advanced drivers' do we know better? At our peril do we advise someone to do something as important as setting a safety system known as the handbrake in direct conflict with their vehicle manufacturer's advice. Food for thought.

By Shaun Cronin, IAM RoadSmart's regional service delivery team manager .

African Safari

By Margaret Manuell

It was 1966. We had travelled across Tanzania from the southern shores of Lake Victoria to Arusha, for our first safari since arriving to teach at the Bwiru upcountry school station. Against all advice, we had set out with our VW 'Beetle' in the 'small' rainy season in the school holiday. We soon discovered that 'small' meant not as large as the 'big' rains, and over halfway on the journey, they were copious enough for a lake to overflow like a river in flood, rushing across our only route. We made it to the other side with water halfway up the car windows, helped by a trucker who had already mastered the crossing. As the sole driver, I was insistent that we would not return the same way. So we had planned a circular route from Arusha through Kenya on the metalled road from Nairobi to Kisumu, where we would take the Lake Victoria ferry. We managed to buy tickets for ourselves and the car in Arusha, and had to pick these up in Nairobi.

Now we were heading for central Nairobi to pick up the ferry tickets. We had breakfasted in a small cafe on the fringes of the capital, whose early morning customers were local workers from the peripheral shanty towns and villages, stopping for refreshment on their walk to jobs in the city. If the proprietor was shocked to find his first customers of the day were an exhausted white couple dressed like upcountry peasants with bush hats, covered in the red dust of dirt roads, he didn't show it. He unlocked the door before his regular opening time to welcome us in. We must have told him that we could only pay in East African Shilling (EAS) before we ordered, but after more than fifty years neither of us can remember! We learnt Arusha that, while we were on the road, Kenya had issued its own currency and no longer honouring the EAS, so unable to change to the new currency, we now had to find a way to get to the ferry at Kisumu with only a British £1 note (old style - this was pre-decimalisation). We had paid in EAS for the ferry and filled up with petrol before leaving Tanzania, but we still had almost 260 miles (414 km) and more than seven hours driving to go. We would probably need fuel top-up, and it would good if we could sleep overnight in a hotel. No doubt nowadays the Nairobi to Lake Victoria route has service stations and motels at intervals along the way, but then even garages with petrol pumps were few and far between, which is why, on safari, you always travelled with a can of petrol in the boot. No one considered it a potential hazard. There were good hotels in the city and those larger towns made popular by tourism: Nairobi had several, as did the game parks across East Africa; and there was another in Kericho, the tea growing area which was a popular destination for holiday visitors.

We found the ferry company's place and picked up our tickets, then went to a bank to see if we could exchange our East African currency. It was very busy and we had to queue for ages in a long line before reaching a cashier. Could she change EAS? No, she was sorry but that wasn't possible. Would she be able to cash a British bank cheque? We were without Kenyan money and had to get to the ferry at Kisumu. Unfortunately, no. In desperation I presented my British £1 note.

"Please will you exchange this for Kenyan shillings?"

A smile.

"Yes, I can do that". While she was counting the money and filling in the paperwork,

there was a tap on my shoulder, and an East African Asian man, behind me in the queue, whispered, "If you wait for me by the door, I can help you."

I thanked him and turned back to the cashier to collect the new currency. It was a bare 19 shillings. Even in East Africa, that wasn't going to get us very far. By the way, if you are wondering why George wasn't dealing with this, I must jump to his defence. As a couple, our tasks were and still are shared 50-50. Money, like driving, was my department!

I told George what the man in the queue had said, and we waited as he had suggested. We watched him while he conducted his business at the counter. He was well-dressed, and by his manner, clearly a businessman. We were both thinking, "Can we trust this man?"

When he came over to us, he introduced himself, said he couldn't help overhearing about our predicament, and explained that he had a British bank account, because he also did business in the UK; and if we wrote him out a cheque on our British bank for the sum we needed, he could give us the same amount in Kenyan cash straight away. He said that we would both be breaking the law by doing it, but in the circumstances he was happy to do that. I was hoping this wasn't a 'con' but he was offering a way out of our otherwise hopeless situation. I thanked him and wrote a cheque for the least we were likely to need, just in case he was going to cheat us, and he gave me the same in local currency, as he had promised. We shook hands, and off he went. Oh, the kindness of strangers! He had given me like for like, and although I anxiously scanned my next bank statement when it arrived months later, just in case, the cheque he cashed was paid out for the same amount that I had written. There were no added zeros. This man was just one of many people from several countries and varied backgrounds who helped us in one way or another during the five years we were in East Africa.

Now we were by no means rich, but with enough to get us to the lake port at Kisumu, and an overnight in Nairobi. We visited Nairobi National Park, only a short drive from the city, and tiny in comparison with the huge national parks like the Serengeti in Tanzania. We drove in a circular route around the whole area, and seemed to be the only visitors. The wildlife was sparse, but, looking now at photos on the Kenyan Government website it looks as if much more populated with a variety of wildlife.

We discovered the Salisbury Hotel and stayed the night. This photo from the 1940s is how I remember it.



Built in 1913, the generous-sized guest rooms were laid out round a quad, and the dining room and bar were in the main building. Over the years we stayed a few times at the Salisbury, sometimes travelling as a couple, later with one or more of our three African-born offspring. It had a resident clientele. These were British retirees who had worked for so many years in the colonial civil service that they no longer looked to Britain as their home. Despite the country's very recent independence, Kenya was where they belonged. I thought that was sad, but they seemed comfortable enough.

Each time we visited we saw the hotel and its resident guests grow even older, more rundown, seedy, frail. On our final visit, in 1970, the Salisbury had been renamed, and the old people had gone. Checking on the internet for this article, I found the sad ruins that had once been the Salisbury, on the *Nostalgic East Africa* website. It's gone now, with other crumbling buildings of the colonial era, demolished on the orders of a government that realised Kenya's growing international tourism required the modern comforts of international 5-star hotels.



"The derelict Salisbury Hotel or later Club 1900 now on the brink of destruction (2012)"

Harjinder Kanwal, author of *Nostalgic East Africa* - on <http://www.sikh-heritage.co.uk>

The next day, we set out on a journey over the best road we had encountered on the whole of our trip. Two cars width and metalled for practically its whole length, with little traffic outside the larger towns. The views were spectacular, and we made good progress, arriving at Kisumu in ample time for the ferry. We watched with trepidation as our car was driven onto a board lowered on chains from the ship, and then hoisted up from the quayside. We expected it to tumble off as it rose and swayed above the deck, but it arrived on its wheels with nothing more than a slight bump. Now we had nothing to do except enjoy the sailing to the next port: Mwanza, Tanzania, and then, car returned to *terra firma*, to drive a mere six miles on familiar roads to our home at Bwiru,

Margaret Manuell 2019

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Our thanks to our Secretary Lynn and chief Observer Grahame for enabling us to compose and issue this Newsletter whilst our Media manager and Editor Julie recovers from illness.

Our kind thoughts and best wishes go to several LAM members who are suffering ill health at the moment. We look forward to your return to good health