



# LAM BUNKER NEWS

Edition 8



## **WINTER TIP No. 1 : MICRO-CLIMATES**

There's a winter hazard that few non-advanced drivers seem to be aware of: micro-climates.

These are potentially icy areas found mainly in the shadows of trees and tall buildings - and both on and under bridges. In areas shaded from the sun, ice and snow can be very slow to clear. It's a good idea to spot a potential micro-climate well ahead, and mention it in your spoken thoughts as well as taking extra care with choice of gear, plus smooth steering, acceleration and braking.

For extensive advice on safer winter driving, check the "Inclement Weather" chapter in your handbook. In severe winter conditions, first ask yourself: "Is my journey really necessary?"

JOHN WATSON Chief Observer

## **Pass your test and that's it forever! By Nigel Rogers**

I suspect that our process of training drivers to be safe and competent on the road is not fit for purpose. Thinking back a long time to the way I drove under instruction at the age of 19 compared to how I drove a week after my test and up to the realisation 24 years ago that I needed to improve my skills on the road or seriously risk not seeing my retirement, reminds me of some of the "antics" that young(ish) drivers get up to. Mind you, some of the older drivers are pretty bad too, some of whom began driving 60 years ago when there was a very basic test or none at all.

The issue is that there is no compulsion to revisit and review driver skills and "road knowledge". Provided you are not caught out by a camera detecting an unlicensed car and you don't crash too often, your chances of "being hauled in by the law" are extremely remote. Hence the situation we have today where many drivers, including HGV1 "Kings of the Road" drive to the limit of what they can get away with rather than what is written in the Highway Code. With the only law enforcement appearing to comprise cameras and flashing signs, one can get away with a lot! So that's why you can pass your test at 18 in a Ford Pop and a week or 50 years later, climb aboard a sports vehicle capable of 150mph with no requirement to check or revisit your basic driving skills.

If we are to drive our vehicles to some sort of uniform standard, the only way to do that is by making a re-test compulsory or significantly financially advantageous. Introducing a compulsory re-test every 5 years or so would probably cause mayhem, with insufficient examiners and possibly the majority of drivers failing their basic test! Using insurance and tax concessions to reward drivers who refresh their skills or take an advanced course is probably a less painful way to maintain and raise standards. Those who confess to be "awful drivers" but still drive themselves and their families are likely to pay the additional cost of motoring, for fear they will never pass their re-test, so such schemes can never be foolproof!

Mind you, if the IAM received a flood of drivers asking for Advanced training just to save themselves money rather than due to them having the desire to improve their skills, our process would rapidly fall over. Over the years we have seen a few drivers come to us "under duress from their employers" and most have not progressed past their intro demo drive or stage 1 or 2 of our system. Perhaps they realised their shortfall in driving skills combined with having no desire to improve was an insurmountable obstacle.

## Too many cars and nowhere to park! - By Nigel Rogers

Given that people need cars for their daily needs, be they internal combustion or electric, an issue arises when it comes to somewhere to park them.

Many folks do not have the benefit of a driveway or designated parking place, so it becomes a fight for a space closest to their front door. This is not limited to old homes in streets designed before the advent of personal transport, but also new homes, where the designers seem to believe that one car for a family of 4 or more is sufficient. Many homes have two working adults, who work in different locations not accessible by public transportation. Then the children grow up and it's now three or four adults, all of whom require cars.

What seems to be happening is that the law is being "pushed" to see how far it will go. Parking near to and actually on bends, junctions, pavements etc has become the norm. Look at Barton-Under-Needwood Main Street between the Shoulder of Mutton pub and the new mini roundabout. There are actually officially designated parking places on a bend that renders the road to one lane, with very limited visibility for passing vehicles and in close proximity to the roundabout. Then you have Alrewas, with its unbroken line of parked cars on one side of the Main Street in the area of the shops and also at the canal bridge. The cars are actually parked on the slope of the fairly narrow canal bridge, which has a blind apex. I note cars are now parked on the other side of the road too, blocking the pavement.

Whereas folks have to park their cars somewhere, one might ask "what is the limit" of what could be described as dangerous or inconsiderate parking?

The bottom line is that the rules stated in the Highway Code, which 99.9 per cent of motorists read to pass their test and then never look at again, are not enforced. If they are not enforced, why have them?

Having spoken to a Community Police Officer a couple of years ago and walked around with him to show a local parking issue, he said: "Well, at least it slows drivers down."

Actually, that's wrong. Drivers only slow if there is an obvious need to do so. What happens is a driver has to commit to passing a long line of parked cars on the wrong side of the road. That's fine until someone comes bounding the other way with their "I have right of way" sign on and tries to bully the unfortunate driver on the wrong side of the road to somehow "give way". Given that some motorists are highly nervous about reversing their cars or vans, one frequently observes passing manoeuvres that involve the use of the pavement!

One wonders how many "rules of the road" one can ignore before attention is devoted to these matters by our almost invisible Police service. Perhaps the situation is that until enough people are killed and seriously injured to register in the Highways Department "points table", we are all left to muddle along? After all, the cost of a few broken door mirrors, scuffs and scratches caused by two cars trying to pass in the width of just over one car is insignificant compared to the ruckus raised by those 10-30 people who arrive home to discover double yellow lines outside their home and have nowhere else to park their cars.



## WINTER TIP No. 2 : ICED WINDSCREENS

Many drivers do not have access to a garage for overnight parking, and quickly clearing an iced-up windscreen can be a real problem unless you're lucky enough to have one which is electrically heated.

Here's a technique you might not have tried: Wrap a hot water bottle in an old tea towel or thin T-shirt, and rub it on the windscreen, plus the rear and side windows and the mirrors. Clear all lights, too. The hot water bottle trick will give quicker and better results than scraping or squirting chemical sprays - though always keep a scraper in the car in case the glass re-ices later. Never pour boiling water onto your windscreen!

\* Remember: no advanced driver goes around in an igloo - that is, a car with only a tiny portion of the windscreen scraped clear. It's not just foolish, it's illegal.

JOHN WATSON Chief Observer

## We asked you: Would road pricing be a good idea? Or a new rip-off?

**WB writes:** I'm not sure how good a thing it would be, would all tax on diesel and petrol be removed? How could it affect holidays and leisure pursuits depending on pricing it could have a massive impact on UK holidays as it's another cost to consider.

It would also have a big impact on those who don't live quite close to where they work and potentially force people to consider moving house and all the costs of doing so and the potential rise in the cost of city homes and drop in value of rural homes because of travelling.

I understand the government needs to get back lost revenue on fuel but is this the best way? Maybe stop the incentive payments for buying electric cars?

**MJW writes:** It's inevitable that the Chancellor will seek to recover the massive cost of the pandemic through tax increases, and the motorist is always an easy target, usually with the excuse that making driving even more expensive helps the environment. However, road pricing or huge increases in fuel duties could well be very unfair for the huge number of motorists living in remote rural areas. For them, driving big distances isn't a choice, as those areas are usually poorly served by public transport.

**LGW writes:** I've been inclined to think road pricing won't apply to my driving lifetime but with the Government needing to claw back Covid costs and petrol car bans only 9 years away, it may come sooner.

Pay for what you use seems the best way but we don't know what the per mile charge would be and if this will end up costing more than our current fuel tax and whether they will need to run together for a period and how that would work. Having a mileage checker reporting from the vehicle is another can of worms waiting to be opened by government conspiracy paranoia.

Our Blue Book refreshers are attached as a separate file so that you can download and store them for use as and when you feel they would be appropriate to your needs. This month's refresher is **Spoken Thoughts**

Stay Safe and well!

We would like to hear from you: If you have anything you would like to contribute to the Bulletin then please email to: [lamjohnwatson2020@gmail.com](mailto:lamjohnwatson2020@gmail.com)