



Mid Wales Matters



The Newsletter of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists

Web site: mwam.btck.co.uk

I AM a better road user ...

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IAM
DRIVING ROAD SAFETY

In this issue:

From the Chairman	1
IAM Regions	1
AGM Report	2
IAM Modular Courses	2
Return of the Dalek	2
Observer Success	3
End of a chore?	3
The new Model T?	3
Bits and Pieces	4
Mystery solved	4
Top Parking Tips	4
New Members	4
Associate Courses	5
Observer dates	5
Committee	5

From the Chairman



I've just read an article about Google's development driverless cars. Apparently, they have been able to navigate motorways comfortably for some time, but can now handle thousands of urban situations that would have stumped them a couple of years ago. Despite this progress, Google says the cars still have lots of learning to do before 2017 when the company aims to get "autonomous driving technology" to the public.

The ultimate goal is to produce a vehicle that operates fully without human intervention. The main benefit would be fewer accidents since, in principle; machines are more reliable than people.

Initially, human drivers would be expected to take control if the computer fails, but eventually there would be no need for a driver – all the car's occupants could read, work, daydream or even sleep while the car does the business on its own. However, Google admits that such a day is many years away, which means, of course, that I'm unlikely to be around when it finally arrives. But I'm not all that bothered – I actually rather like driving!

IAM Regions

Until now the MWAM group has been an adjunct of West Midlands Region 3. Soon the IAM will form an "All Wales" region to which all Welsh groups will belong. The benefit of this move is that the Welsh Assembly Government will be prepared to talk to the IAM about matters which concern Wales alone. Previously this was not possible.

On the local level, our representatives will no longer have to travel to Worcester for regional meetings as the venue will now be the Police and Fire Service Centre in Llandrindod.

Annual General Meeting Report

The 10th Annual General Meeting of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists was held on Saturday 8th March 2014 at The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells. This was attended by Group Committee Members and associates. Our Chairman Francis Torrens addressed the meeting and outlined the achievements and disappointments of the last year and the challenges for the future. The Secretary Geoff Smith reported on the success of our Associates and Observers. He also commended the Group Newsletter, Mid Wales Matters and the Web Site to members. The audited Group Accounts for 2013 prepared by Nigel Godman and audited by Steve Clinton, were approved and elections were held for our Officers, Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer together with those for new committee members.

Those Officers appointed to serve for 2014 are:

- Chairman: Francis Torrens
- Vice Chairman: Mandy Giordano
- Secretary: Geoff Smith
- Treasurer: Nigel Godman

Pat Allen did not stand for re-election and in accordance with group rules one third of our committee stands down each year. This year David Tompsett and Nigel Godman stood down and were re-elected to serve on our committee for another three years.

We now have vacancies for three additional committee members to bring this up to its full complement of 4 officers and 8 members. No nominations were received prior to the AGM and no one member present offered to serve on committee. Any member who would like to become involved with the running of the group should contact Geoff Smith the Group Secretary for further information.

We welcome Angel Davies-Jones who has agreed to join our committee but was unfortunately unable to attend the AGM where she would have been formally elected to server for three years by our membership. Angela joined MWAM as an associate in 2007 and subsequently qualified as a car observer in 2010

Geoff Smith

IAM Modular Courses

The IAM have provided MWAM with 'Confident Driver' presentations covering the topics of Distractions in Car (Parent and Child), Lone Driver, Motorways, Night Driving, Parking & Manoeuvring, Vehicle Technology and Winter Driving. The intended audiences are everyday drivers who may need help with a particular aspect of their driving. Of course they also appeal to anyone (including advanced drivers) who has an interest in driving standards and skills. These presentations will also be made available to purchase from the IAM website as on-line learning modules in the near future. If you are a member of an organisation or club that may be interested in receiving a presentation by MWAM on any of these topics please contact the group secretary Geoff Smith.

Return of the Dalek

'Daleks' could be the answer to solving Britain's estimated £12 billion pothole crisis. A new robotic arm system, that has been given the same name as Dr Who's infamous arch enemies, fits onto the front of a truck and fills holes in the road with tar and gravel in under two minutes - 30 times faster than normal. Known as the Pothole Killer in the US, the system is currently being trialled in Bedfordshire and could be extended nationwide if it proves a success.

It has been dubbed the Dalek, as like the most famous of TV baddies, it features a front robotic arm operated by highway staff from the cab of the vehicle it is fixed to. It is hoped that the Dalek could speed up the urgent repairs needed on the UK's roads that were recently estimated to cost £12 billion. RAC spokesman Simon Williams said: "Patching, while necessary for safety reasons, is nothing more than a short-term solution that will ultimately cost the taxpayer more money. We need the most permanent repair possible to rather than just pouring tarmac into holes and hoping for the best."

National Observer success

Geoff Smith has been awarded National Observer status. This new qualification has replaced the IAM Senior Observer qualification and is awarded by the independent Motor Industries (IMI) organisation. Geoff is the second car observer in our group to achieve this externally recognised qualification. The committee offer Geoff our sincere congratulations on his achievement and his continued contributions to the success of our group as Secretary and car observer. Geoff is pictured on the right receiving his IMI National Car Observer certificate from, and being congratulated by, Mike Lovelock the IAM Staff Examiner at the AGM held at the Bracken Trust on 8th March 2014.



End of a Chore?

Good news for motorists who can't stand the time and expense of washing their car - Nissan claims it is developing a "self-cleaning" vehicle. The automotive giant is running tests at its European technical hub in Switzerland on a new variety of paint designed to repel dirt, rain and oil. It has applied the Ultra-Ever Dry paint to the very latest Nissan Note and over the coming months will be putting the car through its paces in diverse conditions to see how well the paint holds up. Water is prevented from leaving marks on the car's surface by a protective layer of air that effectively cocoons the bodywork.

There are no plans at this stage to include the paint as standard, so it looks as though Nissan Note fans may have to pay extra to have it on their new cars. Geraldine Ingham, chief marketing manager for Nissan Note, said the development ties in with the company's commitment to make everyday tasks easier for customers.

The new Model T?

It has no radio, no boot, no airbag, no passenger-side mirror and just one long windscreen wiper. And if you want air-conditioning to deal with India's summer heat you'll have to buy the deluxe version. India's Tata Group yesterday pulled the covers off the world's cheapest car, the Nano, which goes on sale later this year with a price tag of 100,000 rupees - £1,260 - to bring motoring to the country's billion-strong masses.

For 70-year-old Ratan Tata, the group's chairman, the launch of the Nano is a landmark in transport comparable to the first powered flight by the Wright brothers, or the first moonshot. But environmentalists say the new car heralds a "nightmare" of choking pollution and clogged roads.

Like a modern-day version of Henry Ford, Tata's idea is of an affordable car that is light and simple, yet made from high-quality materials. The result is a jelly bean-shaped vehicle into which five adults can squeeze. The basic model makes no concession to luxury: its price has been kept low by using more plastic than steel, and swapping hi-tech glue for traditional welding. Rival manufacturers had questioned whether the car would meet safety standards, especially if the company plans to export such models to Europe, which requires cars to meet stringent crash tests.

Tata officials said the car had been designed so it could be easily strengthened with metal plates to meet tougher safety standards.

Conceived four years ago, the Nano has already revolutionised the motor industry. Days before Tata unveiled the car Ford announced it would increase spending by \$500m (£250m) a year to make India a hub for "small-car manufacturing". Last October Renault said it was considering making a \$5,000 car in India for export to the US.

For now Tata remains focused on India, which analysts predict will become the fastest growing car market - overtaking China - in five years.

Bits and Pieces

English and Welsh motorists have more chance of getting their cars stolen than anyone else in the world. A new survey by the RAC reveals that one car in 30 is stolen here. In the US, the risk is one car in 40. In Germany it is one car in 200. The good news is that English and Welsh motorists are more likely to get their cars back than drivers of other nationalities.

The M25 has more hold-ups and jams than any other British motorway, according to new Transport Department figures. On average, the M25 is hit by two major traffic hold-ups a day. The longest tail-back, in the past year, was a 19-mile jam after an accident near the M40 intersection.

A list of the 10 cars most likely to be vandalised includes BMWs, the Audi TT and the Range Rover. That figures; these are flashy, prestige cars, symbols of affluence that might cause resentment in folk. But top of pops is the humble Fiat 500!

Mystery Solved

Jess the Border collie, not local vandals, proved to be the unexpected culprit in a mysterious case of vandalised cars in Cumbria. CCTV footage showed that the dog left slow punctures and flat tyres in several cars in the village of Brampton, by biting into them on her daily walks over a six-month period. The appalled owner has been contacted by police and has promised to keep his errant pet under proper control.

Top parking tips

Road safety charity the IAM is offering weekly motoring tips from Britain's top advanced driver, Peter Rodger. This week he is advising on parking.

- Park on the left-hand side of the road if possible.
- In a car park, try and reverse into parking spaces. It's safer when you're driving out and more fuel efficient as you'll be manoeuvring with a warm engine.
- Check your mirrors and over your shoulder frequently – you need to know what's going on around you. Don't just rely on parking sensors.
- When looking for a parking space, don't stop suddenly. Drive slowly past it and size it up to see if your car will fit. And if you can't stop because you have traffic behind you, drive on. Don't stop suddenly.
- At the supermarket, try and park away from trolley parks and corners to avoid your car being damaged by trolleys.
- Leave enough space for a large vehicle to pass your vehicle and for pedestrians to get past easily.
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IAM chief examiner Peter Rodger said: "Parking is an essential part of driving which many people find stressful. Don't feel pressurised by other drivers waiting for you to park – it's important do it at a sensible pace."

New Members

Congratulations and a warm welcome to the following associate who was successful in the IAM Advanced Driving  or Riding Test 

Name	Location	Observer	Date
Ken MacLeod 	Oswestry	Nigel Godman	April 14
Phil Barbury 	Aberystwyth		April 14

Associate Course Dates 2014

 Denotes Car Course  Denotes Motorcycle Course

Course	Start Date	Day	Times		Location
 14/2 	21/05/2014	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
 14/3 	23/07/2014	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
 14/4	24/09/2014	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells

Static Observer Training Dates

Date	Day	Times		Location
10/05/2014	Saturday	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
02/07/2014	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:00 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
25/10/2014	Saturday	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells

Please note that all the above-published dates and venues may be subject to change due to circumstances beyond the committee's control. For the latest information, visit our web site: mwam.powys.org.uk or contact the group secretary. **Please contact our Secretary Geoff Smith if you require any further details.**

Your Committee

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Mid Wales Advanced Motorists (MWAM) publish this Newsletter to provide a means of communication within the group to Members and Associates. The opinions are those of the Editor and individual contributors and do not necessarily represent the view of MWAM or the Institute of Advanced Motorists to which it is affiliated.