

Safer Driving

*The Newsletter of RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders
Thames Valley Group*

Spring 2020



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The Editor writes...

There has been quite a furore over the new Smart motorways. The Police Federation, speaking on behalf of its members who patrol the motorways, has joined the AA and the RAC in labelling them 'death traps'. Yet the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents is curiously silent on the subject, having previously stated that it considers Smart motorways to be safer than those with hard shoulders.

Reading letters written to newspapers, you can learn a lot about driving on motorways and the causes of accidents. The point that struck me forcibly was that made by those who felt that they had no hope of stopping if a vehicle in front was to come to a halt. It appears that few adhere to the two-second rule, and drive so that they are able to stop in the distance they can see to be clear. These motorists seem happy to drive in closely bunched traffic, unconcerned that any mishap could lead to a collision.

The basic idea of the Smart motorways is to use technology to enable the existing roads to carry more traffic without resorting to building new ones. They are in truth a money-saving exercise. And that cash saving has been extended, according to the motoring organisations, by increasing the distance between those areas that vehicles can pull into following a mechanical, electrical or tyre failure. Initially the sanctuary areas were intended to be a few hundred yards apart, but in some cases have been extended to almost two miles.

The real danger arises when a vehicle is forced to stop in a lane, described as 'live' in the motorway jargon, where traffic is still running. In theory, motorway cameras are supposed to spot the problem instantly and to put up a red cross on the gantry above the blocked lane to divert traffic away from the broken down vehicle. But apparently the process is taking many minutes more than planned.

When this matter was discussed in the House of Lords, it was revealed that when an electric car has a flat battery, it does not roll to a stop but halts almost instantly. The drive system locks, and it has to be lifted off the motorway by a recovery vehicle. You can imagine the mayhem that will cause.

A further problem arises because some motorists ignore, or are unaware of, what a red cross on the gantry means, despite the fact that it is often preceded by an easily read sign on a matrix board on the approach to a lane ahead that is closed. It would seem that the Department of Transport could do with mounting an advertising campaign when it makes such changes to ensure that all drivers know what is expected of them.

But at the of the day, politicians will have to realise that with a larger volume of traffic, due to a greatly increased population and changes in social behaviour, more roads and motorways will need to be built. The alternative is to reduce the traffic by pricing it off the road and investing more in public transport. With the planned 5G network, pay-as-you-drive may not be as far off as you think. Things certainly cannot be left as they are.

Max Davidson

From the Spring Chair

‘My thanks go to all of you who have given active support to the Group during my term of office...’

The Thames Valley Group website refresh has been running for a few months now and presents us to the world with a more dynamic and up to date manner consistent with how people generally expect to view sites in 2020.

We are slowly adding content to bring more value and, for those who use social media such as *Twitter*, there are already links to these applications. If you want to post any stories or information that you think would be of interest to the Group, please send these through....

webmaster@roadartvg.org.uk

In the near future, we will be making it easier for all members to add comments and submit articles for inclusion on the site – the more current the site is the more we will all use it.

As you will have seen previously, I plan to step down from the role of Chair and one way that this could happen would be if Robin Carlyle as Vice Chair could step into my shoes and this in turn required somebody to take over his role as member secretary.

Our appeal for volunteers resulted in a handful of capable applicants so thank you to all of those that applied, and I am pleased to say that Samantha Appleyard will be taking over from Robin during March. Please support Robin and Samantha as they move into their new positions.

This is my final submission to the *Newsletter*. Robin will take over for the summer edition as the new Chair. I would like to thank all of those members who have given active support to the Group during my tenure especially all of the Tutors who give up their free time to enhance driving and riding skills in our area.

Keith Pruden

Chair Thames Valley Advanced Drivers & Riders

Theft that could cost you dear

There was a time when metal thieves targeted the lead on church roofs and the copper pipes in public toilets, but they have now found richer pickings in stealing the catalytic converters from cars and most especially 4 x 4s. The bigger the 4 x 4 the better, particularly if it has good ground clearance and is easy to slip underneath to saw off the vital exhaust component.

The first six months of 2019 saw the number of catalytic converter thefts soar to 2,894, compared to 1,674 thefts for all of 2018.

Hybrid cars in the Thames Valley area are especially vulnerable as their catalytic converters get less use than those in petrol or diesel vehicles. As a result, the rare metals are less likely to be oxidised and contaminated with sulphur in the fuel. So the parts are worth more to thieves.



Prices of the precious metals needed nowadays for your car

exhaust system have shot up in recent months with palladium worth £1,300 an ounce, and rhodium selling for £4,000 an ounce. With just a small amount of the metals present in converters, criminals can still sell the part on for £200 or more to scrap-metal dealers prepared not to question the source.

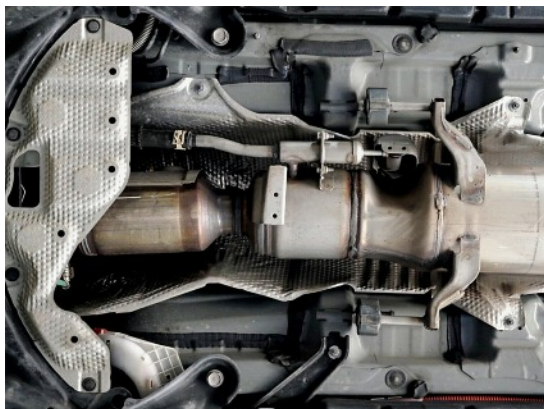
It takes just a few minutes for thieves to remove the catalytic converter element of an exhaust system and such are the financial rewards that criminals have been found stealing the vehicle parts in broad daylight. The higher the price of the rare metals, platinum, rhodium and palladium, needed to make a converter to reduce and filter out the harmful gases from the cars' exhaust systems, the more the thieves target these metals for their scrap value.

Vans and 4 x 4s are the primary targets for daylight thefts, as their exhaust systems are more readily accessible, but no car is immune, particularly if it is parked overnight on a driveway or the street. Such is the rich pickings that thieves will jack up a car if necessary under cover of darkness or in a quiet car park in daylight.

The thieves may get 'only' £200 for stolen catalytic converter's scrap value, but the owner of the vehicle will face a repair bill running into thousands of pounds as it is not just a matter of simply replacing the missing section. Catalytic converters are fitted with cabling and sensors all linked to the vehicle's computer controlled engine management system. So the damage may look minor, but it is horrendously expensive to put right.

Toyota, a market leader in the manufacturer of environmentally friendly hybrid vehicles, suffered a barrage of complaints when it asked customers to pay hundreds of pounds to retro-fit 'Catlocs', designed to make the converters harder to steal. As a consequence, Toyota cut the cost of Catlocs to between £200 and £250 and it claims it does not make any profit from their sale.

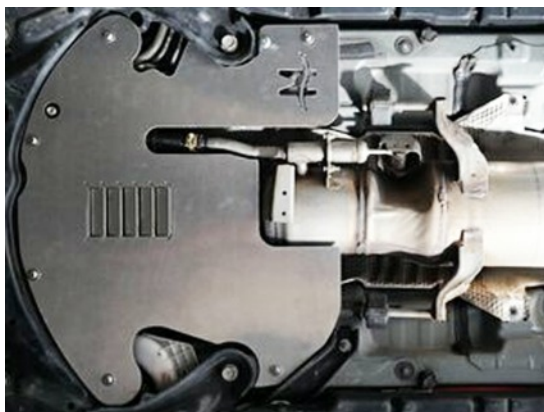
If your catalytic converter is stolen while your vehicle is parked, or has been sitting on your driveway overnight, you may be totally unaware that anything is amiss. The car is still driveable. The engine may sound a little noisier and rougher than usual, but with many cars this is fairly normal when starting from cold, and in any case, sitting inside it not something that will be immediately obvious.



Prius Cat and below with shield

Thankfully, car makers are taking steps to prevent the thefts by fitting protective trays and placing converters in the engine compartment on newer models to make them harder to reach.

A catalytic converter works best when it is hot and closer to the engine. It will not work properly if your motoring consists mainly of short journeys. Its life can be between 70,000 and 100,000 miles, but it will be shortened by frequent short runs, and your car will fail its MoT if it is no longer functioning properly.



To keep it in good order, you should try to do a fast motorway run at least once a month. It is also a good idea occasionally to use a premium fuel, 100 octane petrol or the higher grade of diesel. Just a tankful or so every few months is sufficient when accompanied by a brisk run.

If your car cannot be garaged and has to be parked overnight on the open, it would be well worth considering installing CCTV, advise Thames Valley police crime prevention officers, given the potential cost of replacing the converter.

Max Davidson

Who did invent the electric car?

It seems appropriate that the Government should consider choosing 2035 as the year you can only buy an electric car as it will be almost 200 years since American William Morrison, an immigrant from Scotland, built an electric carriage in 1832 powered by batteries.

An electric car has a rather simple construction. There are batteries, a motor, a control system for the motor, and a wheeled chassis, but it is difficult to say for sure who first combined all of these elements into a vehicle capable of transport, partly due to the technological factors that led to the electric car's development.

In the United States, credit typically goes to William Morrison, a Scottish chemist and inventor who emigrated to Des Moines, Iowa, and took up his experiments with electricity. Morrison's interest lay primarily in building, improving, and profiting from storage batteries, but Morrison knew he had to create some sort of spectacle to get others interested in his improved batteries. Thus it was in the summer of 1890, 'Bill' Morrison found himself installing his storage batteries into a carriage given to him by the Des Moines Buggy Company.

The power was conducted through a Siemens armature of the type used in tramcars cars, but improved by the method of the electrical 'winding' (of the wires), which Morrison had created. It was hoped that the carriage would be completed in time to show it at the Iowa State Fair during the first week of September, but it never appeared.

Morrison's 'electric automobile', a front-wheel-drive car, equipped with a steering wheel and spindle-style (rather than axle-pivot) steering, capable of four miles an hour with its bank of 24 batteries, providing 58 volts, later went on display at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 and participated in the 1895 Chicago Times-Herald race. At a top speed of 4 mph, it would have been more of a walking pace than a 'race'.

Morrison himself had no interest in developing or manufacturing electric vehicles, only the batteries that powered them, and his patents apparently reflected that. The U.S. Department of Energy – along with many others – describes Morrison's invention as 'the first successful electric car.' Indeed, it is easy to give the credit to Morrison. Although he did not put his electric car into commercial production, his story is well known and documented, his electric car performed as designed and intended, and his invention aligns with the general conception of a car as we have come to accept it. It has four wheels, runs independently of tracks, and its power source is self-contained.

But if we disregard some of those assumptions, many other inventors can lay claim to the title of inventor of the electric car. Take, for instance, Thomas Parker. He was an English electrician and inventor who was once described as the Edison of Europe. Parker started manufacturing batteries and dynamos in the early 1880s. He also claimed to have built his first electric car, mainly as a means of commut-

ing to work, in 1884. We only have Parker’s word for that , however trustworthy it may be. The sole record of the car is a photograph with Parker at the steering wheel, dating from 1895.

If it is acceptable to have three wheels on an electric car instead of four, then Andrew Lawrence Riker would have the better claim to the first American electric car inventor. In 1887, a year before he founded the Brooklyn-based Riker Electric Motor Company, and seven years before he built his first electric car, he electrified a Coventry tricycle.

But Riker was far from the first to build an electric three-wheeler. Gustave Trouvé built and successfully tested his version, based on a James Starley tricycle, on the streets of Paris in April 1881. But he soon decided his motor and battery set-up would do better as an outboard motor for his boat. That same year, Gaston Planté built his own electric tricycle, which he displayed in Paris, and Englishmen William Ayrtton and John Perry built theirs, most notably as the first vehicle of any kind to feature electric lighting.

The first electric car may have been built thanks to Thomas and Emily Davenport who were awarded the first patent for an electric motor. Thomas Davenport was a blacksmith in Vermont and his electric motor was used to power the first American tram cars. It was this electric motor that Scottish inventor William Morrison had adapted to build an electric carriage, using non-rechargeable batteries. Although he gets a brief mention in the histories of the electric car, there is a shortage of detail.

To be the ‘inventor’ of the first electric car, did it all have to be built from scratch? Or could it be assembled, making use of others’ inventions? Charles Jeantaud worked with lead-acid battery developer Camille Alphonse Faure to install a Gramme motor and Fulmen battery in a Tilbury buggy in 1881 and went on to sell Jeantaud-branded electric vehicles starting in 1883.

Yet, based on the same stringent qualifications applied to Morrison’s successful electric car, one would be hard pressed to disagree with the assertion that Andreas Flocken’s 1888 Elektrowagen (*pictured*), built in Coburg, Germany, and demonstrated on a trip from Coburg to nearby Redwitz, deserves the title of first electric car.

So should it be Morrison, Parker, Trouvé, Jeantaud, Flocken, or some other unknown inventor be credited with the herald of the age of the electric car? Perhaps we should be celebrating the achievements of all of them. History tells us, particularly the history of mechanical advancements, that great achievements do not start or end with one man or one woman in one particular year or one invention.



Max Davidson

Exciting decade for motoring

As a harbinger of how the wind is blowing for motor taxation, a new electric vehicle tax is being introduced in the Isle of Man this month (April 2020) to make up for lost fuel tax revenue from petrol and diesel vehicles, following an upsurge in zero emission vehicles, which are currently not taxed. The owners will now be asked to pay £14 annually, the island's Infrastructure Minister Ray Harmer has informed the Isle of Man's Parliament, the Tynwald.

Mr Harmer announced that the tax had become necessary as funds collected from petrol and diesel vehicles will 'rapidly decrease over the next 10 years', something which has also already happened in the United Kingdom, where petrol and diesel cars have become greatly more fuel efficient with vast improvements in small engine technology. It is why UK road tax bands were changed to raise more revenue in the 2018 Budget. They are now facing much steeper rises with the tax being based on the new WLTP method of new car testing, which replaced the NEDC method for cars built in Europe from 2017. These taxes come in on 1 April this year and will prove an unwelcome shock for new car buyers.

The Isle of Man has few miles of roads. So, with their limited range, EVs and hybrids there are a sensible choice. At the moment there are 280 electric and 706 hybrid vehicles registered on the island. The Infrastructure Minister says while it is 'good to incentivise', there are 'other reasons' for people switching to electric cars, including improvements in technology.

In October 2018, the House of Commons' Transport Committee called for a national debate on road pricing in the advent of an electric car revolution, with suggested schemes, including a pay-as-you-drive road tax. Such methods of road pricing and motorway tolls are already in use elsewhere in the world. Pay-as-you-drive would be fairly simple to introduce and have the great benefit, according to those who advocate it, of reducing car use by varying the charges according to the time of day and traffic flow.

Economists have predicted that, whatever method of raising extra revenue is decided upon, the eventual move to electric vehicles is likely to lead to British drivers, who drive on average about 7,000 miles a year, being asked to pay an additional new road tax of around £700 annually. If at present we all drove electric cars, there would be a £40 billion hole in the national budget. That is the current sum raised from motor taxes. Most goes into the general taxation pot with just a fraction earmarked for maintaining and improving roads.

At the moment the uptake of electric cars in Britain is slow, even although it is increasing at 14 per cent a year from a low base. Drivers overwhelmingly show a preference for petrol engines, but even if diesels have dropped in popularity, they still command a large and faithful following with the advent of the vastly improved EURO 6 engine versions.

SUVs are the stars of vehicle sales. They have proved to be a hit with drivers with nearly a third of all new cars on our roads now an SUV. As car makers prepare to release a greater variety of makes and models, analysis of the sales shows that the SUV has been the fastest growing motor sector for several years.

In 2008, the SUV barely existed as a sector. In the public mind at that time an SUV was a vehicle capable of being driven off road, and annual sales were around 161,000 in the context of new registrations totalling 2.1 million, a market share of just 11.6 per cent. By 2017, with the availability of new smaller SUVs, most with just two-wheel rather than four-wheel-drive, the SUV sector achieved sales of more than 817,000 from a total car market of 2.5 million, which equated to 30.5 per cent of the annual car market.

The growth of SUV sales in just 10 years is amazing, and it is even greater in France and Germany. In France, 37 per cent of new registrations are now SUVs. It is the rise in popularity of the SUV that has been blamed for CO2 emissions reductions going into reverse in Europe since SUVs, which are heavier and less aerodynamic, tend to use more fuel.

Yet, such is the popularity of the SUV with the ordinary motorist, particularly women, that 114 completely new models have been launched since 2015 with at least a further 20 expected to be seen in British car showrooms within the next 12 months.



Just some of the makes and models, currently taking the market by storm, include the Alfa Romeo Stelvio, Citroen C3 Aircross, Volkswagen T-Roc, Jaguar E-Pace, Kia Sonic, Toyota C-HR, Peugeot 3008 and Volvo XC40. Despite the potential ban on the sale of petrol, diesel and hybrid cars from 2032,

the SUV market has continued to boom, in pure electric, hybrid and petrol/diesel form. These are the cars people want to drive. The small SUV has proved to be an ideal family car and, with its commanding higher seating position, the sort of car many women feel happiest driving.

The huge choice of available models and all year round lifestyle appeal, come sunshine, snow, floods or rough roads, all serve to make the sector appealing to motorists and ensure that the manufacturers continue innovating to meet the demand. SUVs have become the car of choice for families, easily meeting the varied demands of everyday life. As we enter what the Government hopes will be the Roaring Ahead Twenties, a range of new SUV models, covering all sector sizes in electric, hybrid, petrol and diesel forms, are expected to meet the requirements of a rapidly changing market.

Max Davidson

Observation Post

Weather forecasting and other guessing games

As we go through the alphabet of storms – Alice, Bertrand, Clarice, Desmond, Edith, Francis, Georgette, Harold, Inateacup – our roads are now threatened by subsidence, erosion and flooding.

Do you jump into your car and carry on as normal? Do you avoid standing water? Do you test your brakes if you have to drive through a flooded area? Do you remember to put your lights on when it rains? How many points go on your licence if you soak a pedestrian and the case comes to court?

We may come to sunnier days. Is the air-conditioning in your car in good order? Or do you just wind the window down and hope that your passengers will not object too loudly to the high-speed wind in their faces? Where do you keep your sunglasses in the car? Are they within easy reach? Or are they ‘somewhere’ in the glovebox?

Do you put winter tyres on your car? And when was the last time you checked the tyres for damage, tread depth and correct inflation? If not in the past week, you’re on the slippery slope to neglect. And don’t rely on the garage forecourt, buy yourself a plug-in inflator with an accurate pressure display.

In adverse weather conditions, you have an area of rubber about the size of an A4 sheet of paper gripping the road surface and trying to keep you safe. And you vary that grip whenever you accelerate, brake or steer. Leaving the tyres until ‘they look a bit flat’ is a recipe for disaster.

If you are going on a longer journey, do you check the weather forecast – not just locally, but at your destination? You may set out in brilliant sunshine, but your cotton shirt and shorts will not look so clever when you arrive in Cromer where the wind is blowing in off the North Sea on its journey from the Russian steppes.

In the UK, we don’t have a climate; we just have weather – which is why we talk about it all the time. We may not feel it necessary to build an ark, but old Noah was a good Boy Scout – he was prepared.

Weather forecasting has become an increasingly accurate science. It is based on gathering as much available information as possible and predicting from the data what will happen and what is likely to happen. We are then able to plan our activities with more certainty and assurance. Fortunately, unlike meteorologists, we don’t have to predict what will happen on the road for hours and days and weeks ahead. We simply need about a minute’s worth of forecasting – at 60mph, that’s a mile into the distance, at 80mph, it’s a mile and a quarter. Of course, that minute’s worth of information is constantly moving.

Imagine a police officer on a shout, driving at 120mph; her minute is two miles ahead. Do you think she might also be taking into account the prevailing weather conditions?

Perhaps the POWDERY check has two elements to the W. In addition to checking water and other fluid levels, perhaps we should take a serious look at the weather.

Drive well, ride well; arrive safely.

Paul Sheppy

Being a Tutor is ‘utterly brilliant’

An aspect of being a RoADAR Tutor is that sometimes things happen which take you completely by surprise. If this is something which occurs during a tutored drive, then perhaps your own observation was not quite good enough, but then none of us is perfect. However, sometimes something gets mentioned during the discussion before or at the end of the drive, and that is the case I’m talking about now.

Early in the series of drives with one of my Associates we were discussing observation links, and he said he had mentioned what he had learned to a keen cyclist he had met the previous week. He had asked him if he knew that seeing a single lamppost at the roadside meant that it was probably opposite a junction. His friend did not know this and asked him where he got the knowledge. When he told him about our Group and our Better Driving Course, his friend said it was something he should perhaps also take up as his wife now insisted on doing most of the car driving. I told my Associate that I could take his friend for a short assessment drive and following that he could decide whether to ‘sign up’.

Well, that friend is none other than the entertainer Timmy Mallett, best known for his TV shows, such as *Wacaday* and his hit records, including a version of *Seven Little Girls Sitting in the Back Seat*, but now also an established artist.



We arranged the drive for early January, and when I met Timmy, his wife and son were also there and giving him a bit of a hard time about the quality of his driving. However, when I took him out on his own, it was clear that his road safety awareness as a cyclist was well established, and that his family’s comments were perhaps a bit harsh. We had a good talk about *Roadcraft* and how we organise our course, and Timmy said he was certainly interested in taking things further.

However, as Timmy was getting ready at that time for the launch of his autobiography *Utterly Brilliant*, he said he would need to wait a little before taking up the challenge. Watch this space.

Peter Caton

Timmy’s book, *Utterly Brilliant! My Life’s Journey* was published on 16th January 2020 and is available (amongst others) on Amazon in hardback and Kindle versions.

Stop-start won't harm engines

The technology of cars has changed a great deal in recent years which has played a part in the way they are driven. If you have an automatic gearbox with eight or nine speeds, it will smoothly adjust the gear to the declining speed if you lift your foot from the accelerator. With practice you can lift your right foot several hundred yards from a roundabout and arrive at exactly the right speed while at the same time not causing any problems for following traffic.

Many will disagree with this approach which is recommended by the makers in their car handbooks as being best for the engine, brakes and economy of the vehicle. Indeed, when driving in ECO mode with the satellite navigation system running, some driver information displays tell you when to lift your right foot, although I like to think I am usually a step ahead of the computer.

Understandably many will disagree and say it is not proper 'advanced driving'. There are drivers too who do disagree totally with 'stop-start', the means by which a warm engine switches itself off when you come to a halt to stop the engine idling and to cut pollution.



Some think stop-start must put a strain on the starter motor and the battery and switch off the device as soon as they get into the car. Just like the misconceptions about modern gearboxes, parking brakes, and advances in vehicle light systems, some drivers do not understand the technology.

A stop-start system by automatically switching off and restarting your engine reduces the amount of time your engine spends idling, and by so doing leads to cleaner roadside air. Stop-start also reduces your fuel consumption and exhaust

emissions, and it is particularly helpful for cars that spend a lot of time crawling in traffic.

The system works by detecting when your car has stopped. When you go to move off again, your engine is restarted in any one of three ways: releasing the brake pedal, engaging the clutch or pressing on the accelerator. It is so simple you do not need to think about it, and you can drive on without pressing dashboard buttons or turning a key.

The automatic system can be turned off by pressing a button usually with an oblique stroke through the A. But my advice is don't. Stop-start will give you more miles from every litre of fuel. It may be small, but the small savings add up over a year. Nor does stop-start harm your engine. Stop-start does not cut in until the engine has reached a predetermined oil temperature to ensure adequate lubrication of the cylinders. Should you be stuck in traffic for some time and the oil cools, the engine will automatically restart.



In any case, modern engines are designed to ensure that not all the oil drains back into the sump. In addition, the engines have dry lubricants on the bearings to enable them to withstand frequent engine restarts.

But what about the battery, do I hear you ask? New cars are fitted with robust batteries with a high capacity, and the car's computer checks its level of charge before shutting the engine down. If it decides there is insufficient charge, the engine is kept running.

The whole point of stop-start is to cut pollution in urban areas. By switching the engine off it stops harmful gases and particles, which contribute to asthma, lung and heart diseases getting into the atmosphere as well as CO₂.



Leaving an engine idling when taking children to school, stopped at traffic lights or when stuck in heavy traffic is now an offence in many areas with fines ranging between £20 and £40.



Max Davidson

Young less keen on cars

It seems that in comparison to the Baby Boomers the up-and-coming generation has become less keen to learn to drive and own a car, and thus creating great difficulties and consternation for those car companies that are making new models. Purchases of cars by younger adults have dropped sharply. Surveys suggest that the latest generation do not put car ownership particularly high on their list of priorities.

Perhaps worse too, from the motor industry's point of view, is that these potential drivers, with so many now going on to further education, are not even applying for driving licences as readily as previous generations, which means that the steady flow of new drivers and potential car purchasers is not running so smoothly and predictably as in the past.

Some even dislike the very idea of driving. They are quite happy to do without a car and are delighted to find the means to do without one.

One major reason, as already mentioned, is the great changes in education. Around 60 per cent of young women and 40 per cent of young men go on to university where they have expenses that do not allow anything spare to provide themselves with their own means of transport.

For many of them too there is the concern for the environment. They will have grown up being told about the evils of the internal combustion engine, and how its emissions pollute the air of our towns and cities.

Add to that there is the expense of finding somewhere to live when they graduate and find a job. Britain has currently a shortage of around a million homes which has sent rents and property prices sky high. Baby Boomers might be profiting, but the young are suffering. Unlike in the past, some new graduates even have to settle for very low incomes, working as 'interns' in the hope of proving that they are worth employing.



You can contrast this situation to that of earlier generations, particularly those who grew up in the comparatively wealthy South-East, where graduate incomes were far above anywhere else in the United Kingdom. In this particular area people, reached adulthood believing that having and owning a car was a crucial part of life, something that was a must-have. Getting a driver's licence as soon as one reached 17 was a rite-of-passage, showing that you were about to become an adult. Being able to drive was a source of pride.

The car gave you a certain status among your friends. It was also a source of freedom with the ability to escape from the overshadowing control of your parents,

even if you were being permitted to borrow what was once referred to as ‘the *family car*’. Nowadays anyone learning to drive would expect to have their *own* car. There has been a massive change in attitudes by young people toward cars and the act of driving.

Long gone are the days when people drove for pleasure by taking a Sunday outing into the countryside. Many of our roads are now almost permanently crowded with traffic, and the roads themselves are very poorly maintained. Instead of driving into the countryside, young people are now more likely to be keeping fit by cycling either alone or in groups.



Even if a young person does have enough for a small second-hand car, such as a Ford Fiesta, Vauxhall Corsa or Volkswagen Polo, the next challenge is getting it insured. New drivers under 25, even with a black box fitted to monitor their driving, can still expect to pay well in excess of £2,000 for their insurance. Then there all the other outlays -- some might even call them headaches -- that they have to contend with in

running a car, road tax, maintenance, and parking. Some car parks now charge as much as £3 an hour, and £10 for a day’s parking is not uncommon.

The young generation are often heavily burdened with student debt, so large that some may never be able to repay it, and are not interested in digging themselves deeper into the debt abyss. Even if they have the money, they are bound to have noticed, or experienced, 10 years or so of cutbacks in Britain with little income growth.

They are naturally nervous about putting whatever savings they might have into a car. Today’s young people are savvy enough to know any car will drop in value the moment they drive off in it. They are more likely to want to put what little they have towards something more secure such as a place to live. The car can come later.



Max Davidson

Coventry's debt to Percy Riley

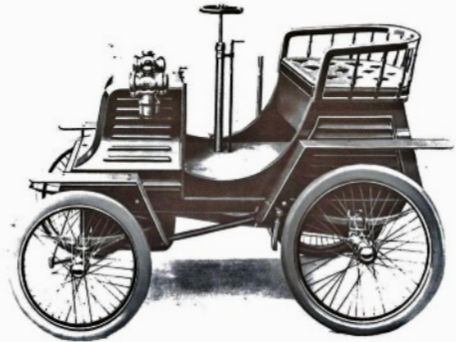
It took a schoolboy, one with access to a fully-equipped machine shop, working steadily for two years, to beat the Germans to one of the landmark engineering developments in the evolution of the internal combustion engine and to help make Coventry the home of the British car industry.

And it took that schoolboy's nephew two decades to pay tribute to that pioneer with a replica of the first automobile to bear the Riley name. Late into the nineteenth century, internal combustion engines largely relied on vacuum and compression to activate intake valves. These so-called automatic intake valves limited internal combustion engines to rather low speeds and thus low power outputs. The intake valve needed to be opened and closed mechanically for sustained high rpm.

Percy Riley may not have been the first to invent mechanical intake valves. The French inventor Fernand Forest and British carmaker Lanchester pioneered them in 1892 and 1895, respectively. But Percy Riley did use them in a way that his forebears didn't. While still in secondary school, he designed his first car, one that used the mechanical intake valves in a single-cylinder, two and a quarter horsepower engine, mounted in the front, and driving the rear wheels via a belt. Then, at aged 16 in 1896, he began to build his car in the workshops of his father, William, who ran a bicycle business in Coventry.

The car was of rather conventional design for the period, having four narrow, thinly-spoked wheels, semi-elliptic cart springs, seating for two directly over the rear wheels and right-hand steering. Braking was done by pads pressed on to the rear tyres. The engine, front mounted and air-cooled, was a vertical previously mentioned single-cylinder unit.

The car was completed in 1898 and, after preliminary road tests, made the non-stop journey of 18 miles from Coventry to Stratford-upon-Avon. This particular Riley was used for several years in and around Coventry and was subsequently sold in Belfast. Percy's prototype worked well, but it didn't lead to a production version. His father, William Riley, insisted that his company should remain a bicycle producer, which is where he thought success lay, and that it should not involve itself in cars. He did, however, build some motorcycles and tricycles powered by internal combustion engines and ended up having to rely on Percy to keep that business viable.



In 1900, the car company of Karl Benz, the inventor of the world's first motor car in 1886, tried to lay claim to the British patent for mechanically operated intake valves as a means of extracting royalties from every internal combustion engine builder using the valve system in Britain. Percy Riley managed to show British courts that he had priority on the design and so he saved the British motor industry a great deal of money. Two or three years later, Percy and his brothers Victor and Allan went into the car business for themselves. Other British carmakers, now freed from the worry about a Benz patent, proceeded to do the same, flocking to Coventry over the next few decades.

Why exactly Percy Riley sold his 1898 prototype, no one, not even he, seemed to know. By the Thirties, he decided to track it down, offering a reward of £50 for information on its whereabouts, but nothing came of the search. Consequently, Percy's nephew – also named Victor – decided in the late 1990s that a replica of the prototype should be built. He hired Geoff Haviland and Philip D'Archambaud to do the construction, based entirely on just a few old black-and-white photos, and, following the designation of Coventry as the United Kingdom's City of Culture for 2021, decided to have the car complete and on public display for the year-long event.



Last autumn, however, just before the 2019 Classic Motor Show in the National Exhibition Centre outside Birmingham, the Riley Motor Club and the Mayor of Coventry took the wraps off the replica, still engineless, but otherwise complete, at the Coventry Transport Museum. Those involved in the reconstruction intend to have a replica engine running and installed in their Riley before the 2021 celebration for Coventry as City of Culture.

John Booth

Will you own a driverless car?

With the great advance in what is known as AI (artificial intelligence) and the coming of 5G, commonly referred to as ‘the Internet of Things’, are driverless cars getting closer to reality? Nissan recently made a 231-mile trip from Cranfield to Sunderland on the M1 and ‘A’ roads with a driverless electric Leaf, although there was an engineer sitting ready to take over if anything should have gone wrong.



Some have even suggested that humans will not be able to drive a car other than to enter their intended destination into the satellite navigation system and perhaps push a start button. In theory that should mean no further traffic offences, such as speeding, and a totally different method of insuring the vehicle, which may have to be borne by the manufacturer, as there will be no ‘driver’ just a passenger or passengers.

The prospect of electric cars may also make owning one’s personal car undesirable. The hassle and prospect of trying to find a charging point and the time taken to top up the battery may make possessing a car seem more of a chore rather than a pleasure and an advantage.

At the moment more and more of us are choosing to live in large towns and cities. Countryside and village living are less attractive to the young and are becoming the sole prerogative of the old. Much of this has got to do of course with employment and the cost of housing.

It could be that existing cars are becoming too expensive to own and to run. As it is at present, many new cars are leased on contracts lasting three or four years rather than purchased with a loan. The average mileage driven has also fallen to around 7,000 miles annually. With cars that are owned by city dwellers, there is the increasing restrictions on parking, congestion charging and the cost of parking.

It could be that we are seeing the end of mass ownership of personal transport. People in future may decide that it is pointless to own an expensive constantly depreciating asset that sits parked for 95 per cent of its life. For those who need a

car to get around, more use will be made initially of a service such as Uber and later driverless cars, which can be summoned on a smartphone app.

The predictions are that individual ownership of cars is going to disappear. We are already seeing that with the increase in leasing. The view is that driverless cars will be owned by the car manufacturers themselves, such as Volkswagen, or special car-sharing firms which have transformed themselves from the present car rental firms. Volkswagen bank, which finances car purchase, already makes more money from lease agreements than by selling vehicles.

The car makers may eventually have fleets of driverless cars. Just like London's famous Boris bikes, they will position their autonomous cars in places to make as much money as possible, doing so one outing at a time. If 10 or 20 years ago you had suggested that borrowing a bike to cycle in a British city would be so successful, people would have laughed at the idea, and no one is laughing now. Borrowing a bike is now commonplace throughout Britain and Europe.



This new form of transport will answer the question about how the average person will afford the cost of an electric or driverless car. They will not need to. It will also solve many of the congestion problems in cities as there will not be the same need for cars, which end up parked by the roadside for most of the day.

Buying a car today is not an investment. In cash terms it is the worst and most wasteful purchase any of us can make. Whereas a driverless car is a type of asset that a company can purchase, or a manufacturer can own, and anticipate that it will bring in a good revenue.

In the not too distant future, there will still be cars, but not as we know them. For those who want the thrill of speed and taking control, there may have to be tracks where electric cars, away from public roads, without 'artificial intelligence' can be driven purely for pleasure and not as a form of transport. Once true driverless cars become a reality on public roads, you and I, if we are still around, are not going to be driving them anyway. So make the most of your motoring while you still can.

Max Davidson



My life as a Yamaha XT 500

... as told to Gerry Gooch.

I have faint memories of being on a conveyor system. Air driven screwdrivers, spanners, hoists lifting parts towards me, until in quite a short time I was rolling off the production line and my life began. I was 500 XT and I was packed inside a crate at the Yamaha factory in Japan. Later I was put into a large container, and moved on to a ship. When I arrived at Mitsui Machinery Sales Company Ltd in Chessington, Surrey, it was a pleasant relief after all I had endured. Then one day I heard the name Gerry Gooch being mentioned. He was to be my owner.

The following day petrol was put in my tank. Gerry sat astride me and started my engine. I was to be part of the Gerry Gooch Motorcycle Display Team. My first show involved jumping as far as I could in the small arena, but I was wary when Gerry attached a ladder to me, climbed to the top and let me to make my own way around the arena. Some 12 years of shows followed. Then I was left alone. Years passed and twice I was moved to a new home.

Then one day I was put into a van and taken to a garage owned by Steve Restall. My frame was painted until I looked better than new. My lights were fitted, a battery installed, and Steve gave me a new petrol tank, mudguards, side panels, chain and sprockets. I felt so good after having stood idle for 17 years. The following day Steve took me to the MOT station. I glowed with pride as the certificate was made out. All that remained was for Gerry to take me to the DVLA in Portsmouth to get my registration NPO 894R



In 2017, after Gerry broke his leg while riding in Peru, I stood again unused in his garage. Worse was to come when Gerry crashed my friend FJR1300. I wondered what was to become of me now that Gerry could no longer ride a bike. My fears were eased when Alastair from Aberdeen came to see me. He has given me a new home.

Gerry paid Yamaha £312 for me in 1977 and sold me for £5400. So I must be good, mustn't I?

This story is dedicated to Steve Restall.

Gerry Gooch

Congratulations...



.....to the following people who have passed their Advanced Driving Test.
We would all like to say 'Well done' to them and their Tutors.

Car Members

Associate/Member	Grade	Tutor
Peter Caton	Diploma	Retest
Gerald Norris	Silver	Andy Ball/Tony Parish
Cosmo Osmond	Gold	Paul Sheppy

Motorcycle Group

Associate/Member	Grade	Tutor
John Bailey	Silver	Robin Carlyle
Andrew Legge	Silver	Gemma Allen

Please remember to notify Samantha Appleyard
membership@roadartvg.org.uk of your Test success.

Please also remember to let us have a note too of any reTest result.

Publishing results encourages those Associates who are about to take the Test and gives an indication of how the Group is performing.

Your contributions to the Newsletter either 'Letters to The Editor' or articles of interest to members are always welcome.
Please send them to The Editor, Max Davidson ...editor@roadartvg.org.uk

REMINDER

The full colour edition of the Newsletter will still be available four times a year online at
www.roadartvg.org.uk

Those of you who do not have access to the Internet will still receive a printed copy, but the pictures, regrettably, will all be black and white as the cost of colour printing has proved prohibitive.

What's On - 2020

MONTH	Committee/Tutors	All Full & Associate Members
MAR	31st :Committee Meeting Venue Theale	See NOTE 2
APR	25th :Induction Day. (by invitation only) Venue Theale See NOTE 1	See NOTE 2
MAY	9th : Tutors Workshop Venue Theale	See NOTE 2
JUN		See NOTE 2

The following was published in previous issues of this Newsletter.....

*“If you have any suggestions for a Group visit
or a guest speaker for a meeting then please let us know !”*

We are still waiting to hear from you.....

*Please help us to remain a growing, friendly Group by letting
the Committee know your wishes for future activities !*

NOTES :

1. New Associates may join at any time by contacting the [Membership Secretary](#).
Induction Days for new recruits are held quarterly.
Contact Paul Sheppy or Neil Goodhand for details.

2. The regular Monthly Meetings have now been replaced by one-off special events suggested and organised by members. These may be targeted visits to places of interest to members or special guest speakers. Full details will be advertised on the website and e-mail notices sent out to enable members to register their interest.

- PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE REGULARLY TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT-

3. Please note that Guests (potential members?) Are usually welcome at our events. Any exclusions or charges will be made clear before booking.

Motorcycle Section Social Rides

These normally take place on the first Sunday of each month - details can be found on our website under Events - but being weather dependant are often not confirmed until a week beforehand. Contact [Tim Cuell](#) for more information.

In case of changes please refer to the website for latest information.

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Where 'xxxxxxx' = committee post.



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