

Safer Driving

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

Summer 2021



Photo by Peter Caton

Bellis perennis - aka bruisewort !

Using the pdf edition - quick search with hyperlinks

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Who is who on the Committee?

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Updated 15/12/20

The Editor writes...

For the first time in several years, everyone who is a Member of the Group will receive a copy of the *Newsletter* by post. This decision was taken by the Committee as it was felt that not enough people logged on to the website to find out what was going on. The belief is that by making everyone feel more part of the Group its various activities will be better supported.

Several of the Group's Members have contributed to this particular issue. It has a feature by chairman **Keith Pruden** who gives his experience of driving electric cars. The RoSPA examiner **Mark Smith**, in a new regular column, gives his advice on how to make a good impression when you take your Advanced Test. **Gerry Gooch** tells us what he did when he discovered that the French customs were blockading the port of Le Havre.

The Membership Secretary, **Samantha Appleyard**, has advice on overcoming nervousness when riding a motorcycle. She has devised a number of strategies to overcome the problem. **Paul Sheppy**, who writes the *Observation Post* column, and who with **Tony Parish** is in charge of car driver training, has advice on how to make your drives safer. **Axil Thill**, the Group's Treasurer, tells us about his devotion to Harley-Davidson motorcycles and makes a plea that we ought to find time for some fun. **Graham Knight** appeals for help with motorcycle ride-outs.

With the change in working practices, more people will be working part of the week at home. This could have a marked effect with fewer commuting journeys and fewer miles driven overall. Some may see this as the perfect time to change from a fossil-fuelled car to one with battery power. There are now well over 100 new models to choose from.

In California, where the green revolution has taken hold, hybrid cars such as the Toyota Prius have long proved popular, especially with celebrities. There has also been a big shift to electric cars. But many owners are discovering problems with charging the batteries as there are not enough fast chargers available, and even those that there are prove what the drivers call 'a hassle'. One in every five battery car owners has reverted to petrol cars which can be refuelled 'in a few minutes'. The difficulty in California seems to be related to their 110-volt electricity supply and home and workplace charging facilities. So it may not be applicable here.

Back in Britain, so-called Smart motorways continue to create a furore over safety. The police patrols think they are dangerous. The fire brigade says they cause delays in responding to accidents, and a growing number of ordinary drivers fear that they are death traps.

The Department of Transport responds by saying that their data shows that fatalities are less likely on Smart motorways than on conventional ones. 'This conclusion has been reached by looking at the average trends over a number of years which is essential to mitigating volatility in the casualty data.'

It would seem that we just have to get used to them and take more care.

Max Davidson

From the Summer Chair

With freedom from lockdown, the Group's bikers have been able to restart events and return to normality as highlighted in this story from our website

<https://roadartvg.org.uk/caffeine-machine-ride-out-wednesday-21st-april>

Bike training began a month ago and now car tuition is also back, which means our primary purpose as a group has returned. We are also getting retests, but there is a long backlog. So be patient.

The on-line events have continued each month and have covered topics such as this example from Graham Feest on a road safety innovation.

<https://roadartvg.org.uk/travel-traffic-safety-and-roadsapril-guest-speaker-graham-feest-uk-national-road-safety-committee-chairman>.

If you have a speaker you would like to be invited, or a subject that you would like to be covered, send me or David Tomlinson an email and we will try to sort something out.

Now that training is building up a head of steam, it is a good time to consider whether you need a refresher drive/ride ahead of your retest and also if you know someone who might benefit from a free assessment drive/ride. Ask them to get in touch with us.

One question that some Associates have asked me on passing their test is, *'What can I do next?'* The answer is too long to give here, but one response for bikers is, *'How about taking some training to become a motorcycle run leader and back marker?'* And for car drivers and bikers alike, *'Why not share your favourite road by organising a drive/ride out.'* Groups IO is a great tool for such social events and attendance can be managed if you contact David Tomlinson with your ideas.

Finally, some comments on Smart motorways. I am sure if I asked a room full of advanced drivers and riders if they understood the operation of these all hands would rise, but if I then asked, *'and are you totally at ease with using them?'* I would get less than a unanimous response.

I understand the rationale for them, but when I first read how the Department of Transport would roll them out, I had misgivings about the technology and the reliance on humans to detect emergencies. The changes announced by the Government will improve the detection, but I remain sceptical when we need drivers to have more than a passing understanding of safely using these roads and, more importantly, the impact on emergency service vehicles that are delayed by lack of a hard shoulder.

My wife, who isn't 'advanced' but is a capable and safe driver, avoids using Smart motorways and takes less statistically safer routes if she can. To me this shows that more education is needed to improve safety as the Smart motorway network is expanded.

Keith Pruden, Chairman

An owner's view of electric cars

In the *Spring Newsletter*, there was quite a bit of commentary on electric cars and some statements made that I would challenge. I have had two electric cars. The first some years ago was a BMW i3 with the range extender. So it was not really a full fat EV and the reason for that was the small battery with limited range and, at the time, poor charging facilities in the UK.

That car definitely falls into the definition of the *Newsletter* summary from the article headlined, **Will you be driving electric?** At the end it asked, *'Should you buy one? At present they are perfect for the commuter and local running of up to 200 miles. Charging is still uncertain and takes too long if you need a car for longer trips.'*

Times change however and after running a BMW M5 for 2.5 years I wanted to replace it with something less expensive to run (21 mpg on a good day, more than £500 in road tax, plus servicing, insurance, and replacement tyres etc for the BMW M5) and also a car that did not carry hefty congestion charges for travelling into London.

At the same time though I wanted to keep the level of performance that the BMW M5's 556 BHP twin turbo V8 supplied, but with more drivability from four-wheel drive. Seemingly a tough set of requirements, but one that was met very well by my Tesla Model 3.

I don't dawdle. I drive as fast as the conditions safely allow, and make full use of the acceleration whenever it is needed. Plus I cruise at good speeds on the motorway, even in the winter months which are bad for batteries. When lockdown rules allowed, I managed 280 to 300 miles range from a fully charged battery. So I consider the comment in the article *'unless you drive moderately and at modest speeds you will get nothing like that'* to be misleading.

The Model 3 was upgraded a few weeks after I took delivery of mine and now has a longer range, which is approximately 10 to 15 per cent better. In terms of costs, my insurance is 30 per cent lower than on the BMW M5, the monthly lease cost is £400 (much lower than the £1200 for a model S), and to charge it fully at home, giving around 280 miles range, is about £9.



One big attraction for me to go Tesla was the ‘Supercharger’ network. I have used this once and topped up the battery with around 200 miles in about 35 minutes for under £9. It is not as convenient as filling with petrol, but equally it is not a disaster. There are other fast charging suppliers appearing in the UK. So Tesla will not have this all to themselves.

The Tesla is far from perfect. It is a heavy car. So despite its low centre of gravity, it feels ponderous on B roads, but at least it doesn’t try to spit me into the hedge on anything other than perfectly dry roads like the M5 would.

The build quality is average, and it feels Ford-like. So it is not terrible, but not special, and after seven months of ownership nothing has broken. The biggest downside is the over intrusive driver assist functions that I believe we shall all have to live with due to over-zealous policy makers. The Tesla systems can be muted, but not switched off totally, and this needs to be redone for every drive, and they can take over the steering and braking if the systems decide the car is at risk.

Most of the problems can be avoided by not using the adaptive cruise control, but that should not be the case, and Tesla have work to do to make these aspects of driving more acceptable.

I am not an electric car zealot, and I actually think some form of fuel cell approach will ultimately be the one that dominates and not batteries. I have a nice Boxster-S in the garage at home and enjoy driving my wife’s Mini Cooper, but I do think feedback from an actual user of such a car will provide some balance to what could be perceived as a negative view from Max’s article on running an EV today.

Keith Pruden

The Editor writes: I am always delighted to have Members views on the contents of the Newsletter. My article was based on a wide range of information from the UK and North America. But as Keith rightly says, an actual user’s view is invaluable. With regard to speed and range, the WLTP test gives the VW ID4, for example, 414 miles of range in city driving, but this drops to 319 miles (combined figure) out of town. So the faster you go the fewer miles you get from a battery charge.

Don't knock petrol as a fuel

Petrol, other than diesel, is probably the substance that inspires the strongest emotions about fossil fuels. Once upon a time we were concerned with brand loyalty, using only BP, Shell or Esso. Nowadays we are more likely to choose a quick fill up at the supermarket.

Refinery technology has been revolutionised since the advent of the first cars. The petrol that powered them was very different from the fuel of 1940, which in turn was different from the super fuel blends of the 1960s. Today's fuels are a different product yet again.

If you own a classic or veteran car, it can be quite a challenge to get

the correct petrol for a car built 50-plus years ago. An engine with the wrong fuel will quickly make that known through noises, greatly reduced power, and even failure.

Being knowledgeable about petrol means separating fact from fiction. There are also lots of additives that proclaim improvements and refinements to petrol at the pump. Some are genuine, and some are just marketing strategies. Becoming familiar with the right fuel is vital to any car enthusiast. It will protect your car from harm and may even help it run better.

Petrol does not burn of its own accord. It has to be in vapour form to ignite properly, which is why you should never store it in containers exposed to the sun. Modern petrol, especially winter blends, are designed to be more volatile and will turn to vapour more readily.

That tendency toward vaporisation means easier cold starts, but it can also mean easier vapour lock in older cars, which occurs when the fuel vaporises in the fuel lines. Vaporisation is good when you want to start the engine, but bad when you want to pump fuel to the engine. Vapour lock all but stops the fuel from pumping. Hot weather, or a hot-running engine can make the problem worse. Modern cars have fuel tank-mounted pumps to push petrol forward, maintaining the pressure in the fuel lines. In an older car, an electric fuel pump repositioned closer to the fuel tank than to the engine can help avoid such problems.

The octane ratings of petrol are determined by running the fuel in a test engine with variable compression and measuring its resistance to rough running called



‘knock’. Octane has nothing to do with the amount of potential energy in a fuel, only how much it can be squeezed before it will explode on its own.

High compression ratios and forced induction squeeze the air-fuel mixture more to obtain better efficiency and power, but if the petrol ignites before the spark, the power is wasted, and engine damage can occur. Electronic sensors, along with ultra-precise ignition and valve timing, let modern engines, which typically have rather high compression ratios, to run safely on lower octane fuels. Sometimes it sacrifices mid-range torque and subsequently, fuel economy. So do not waste money buying a higher grade than you need.

But on older cars with high-compression engines, or that call for higher octane, you need to buy the more expensive fuel at the pump. A few more pence per gallon could save you from expensive engine repairs.

The original petrol, more akin to paraffin, was only around 30 to 50 octane. That was the only fuel available to pioneering motorists up to about 1913. New blending and cracking processes introduced about that time added octane-boosting substances such as benzene and naphtha to the mix.

In the 1920s, tetra-ethyl lead came on the scene and remained the primary anti-knock additive until the introduction of the catalytic converter in the 1970s, but today it has been replaced with MTBE (methyl tert-butyl ether) and ethanol since the 1980s and has greatly reduced emissions. Petrol remains toxic and a carcinogen, but its neurological risks have been reduced.

This September the proportion of ethanol in petrol will rise to 10 per cent in a green initiative to cut CO₂ emissions. It will mean that your car will do fewer miles to a gallon. With ethanol likely to be a constituent of the fuel sold at the pumps as long as cars continue using internal-combustion engines, older cars still on the road will benefit from simple fuel system changes to cope with it.

Rubber fuel lines in much older cars can withstand 5 per cent ethanol, but they will degrade if exposed to 10 per cent ethanol. So replace them with plastic tubing. Degraded fuel line gunge causes problems with carburettor jets. It is best to re-jet the carburettors to compensate for the different energy density of the 10 per cent ethanol blend (E10) of the new petrol. Perhaps the biggest complaint about ethanol fuel is that it suffers over time from what the petroleum experts call ‘phase separation’, where the lighter elements separate from the heavier, leaving two different octanes layered atop one another.

Classic cars, motorcycles, outboard boat engines and lawn mowers that are going to have little or no use in winter should be drained of fuel. Ethanol is also hygroscopic, which means that it will absorb moisture from the air. Water in fuel lines causes corrosion, can freeze, and most certainly will not burn in your engine. It is also wise in winter, if you are not driving many miles, to buy just 10 litres at a time to avoid difficulties rather than filling your tank with the new higher ethanol (E10) petrol.

The Examiner

Our new columnist has tips on your test

With lockdown restrictions easing and tests once again getting underway, I have some advice from an examiner's point of view, which can get an advanced test off to a good start. Firstly, ensure your vehicle is clean inside and out. It doesn't have to be valeted but just clean and tidy. I remember doing driving courses as a police officer and at the end of the week the driving school sergeant would inspect the vehicles with white gloves, including under the wheel arches. Please be assured that that will not be happening at the beginning of a test!

Following the eye sight test, which fortunately I have had no one fail to date, we move on to the vehicle checks. The mnemonic for this seems to vary slightly between the various emergency services and tutors, from POWDER to POWDERS to POWDERY. In essence, there is little practical difference with the obvious aim of ensuring that the vehicle is safe and legal to drive. I tend to look at the mnemonic as follows:

Petrol Ensure that you have sufficient fuel/electrical charge for your journey. I would go further and consider the P as power. Is the vehicle petrol, diesel, electric or hybrid? Is it front, rear or all-wheel drive? The actual fuel level is in practice checked during the cockpit drill.

Oil Oil level. Secure oil filler cap and dipstick.

Water Coolant level including coolant/antifreeze mixture. Also check front and rear screen wash level.

Damage Visual examination of exterior, looking for insecure items and/or damage.

Electrics (and lights) Verify operation of electrical systems. Mandatory running lights (main and dipped beam).

- Brake and reversing lights.
- Indicators and hazard warning lights.
- Number plate light.
- High intensity lights
- Interior – instrument warning lights (this will be covered in the cockpit drill)
- Audible warning systems (horn)
- Windscreen wipers (front/rear)

Rubber, wheels Wheel nuts secured to correct torque setting. Tyres: tread depth/free from cuts, bulges, tears/pressure/compatibility.

S or Y Self or You. Are you safe to drive taking into account many factors including illness, fatigue, alcohol, medication etc.

Please do not be concerned with going into too much detail regarding the POWDER check. I just need to be satisfied that you know what to check and how to check it and what the legal limits apply to your vehicle. *Spoiler alert:* expect to be asked at some stage the legal tread depth limit for the tyres fitted to your vehicle.

I always advise not to think of the test as a test but an opportunity to show the examiner what you can do. Having been through several driving courses and tests myself, I know how you are likely to be feeling. Enjoy your driving and stay safe. **Mark Smith**

Observation Post

How do we make roads safer?

This is not a whinge about the maintenance of the roads in the UK. I will not start there and I will not finish there. What I would like to think about is how we can contribute to road safety by controlling what is happening around us.

Information, position and speed

Since we are only in immediate control of the vehicle we are in (or on), it might seem odd to be talking about how we can manage things which appear to be beyond our control. However, there is much we can do by our use of information, position and speed which will influence – and even control – the actions of other road users.

Control what's ahead

We may not be able to prevent the inattention or negligence of drivers and riders in front of us, but we can avoid getting caught up in the consequences. As ever, it begins with good information gathering.

Let me give an example. We are travelling on a dual carriageway with two lanes on each side of the central barrier. We have just begun our journey. So we are allowing our vehicle to warm up properly before we attempt to press on. Traffic in our lane is travelling at about 60 mph, but every so often it slows to about 40 before regaining the earlier speed. Traffic in lane two is moving at around 70 to 80mph. The next junction is about a mile ahead. What hazards do we foresee?

I suggest that there is a high probability that in the next three quarters of a mile, someone in lane two will want to leave at the next junction. If this is a late decision, the driver will try to find a gap – possibly by forcing their way in. Brake lights will cascade back as vehicles in lane one have to adjust for the new situation.

The information is all out there for us to take in. What use do we make of it?

First of all, we keep a very clear check on the situation ahead and we make frequent and good use of our mirrors. Now we adjust our position and speed. We drop back from the vehicle in front, so that anyone needing to come in from lane two can do so safely. We drop back far enough to be able to control the space in front. We also reduce our speed, so that following traffic will be travelling slightly slower with a consequent need for less abrupt and harsh braking.

We have planned for worst, rather than hoping for the best.

Control what's behind

In a way, we have already begun to see how by controlling the space ahead of us, we can control what's going on behind. Once again, the secret is in information, position and speed.

We are on a winding country road. Visibility is good and the road surface is dry. The road is subject to the national speed limit, and while it is not marked as single track in parts it is quite narrow.

We are travelling at 50 mph. A following car is closing quite quickly and is clearly in a bit of a hurry. We are approaching a series of bends and the road is now making its way across a stretch of the downs. If the road were straighter and a bit wider and the view more open, we would consider moderating our position and speed in order to let the following vehicle pass. He has already begun to press...



We have just passed a warning triangle informing us of farm traffic ahead and we can see what look like barns ahead on the offside. We cannot see anything approaching from the opposite direction. However, we are concerned about the possibility of movement from the farm. We make a decision, which requires a lot of care and attention.

We check the mirrors and use an arm signal to show that we are slowing down. We move just a little towards the centre of the road so as to discourage for the moment any attempt by the following driver to overtake, and we prepare to reduce our speed further should anything ahead change. The driver behind is now quite close, but as we crest the bend, we see what we had anticipated. A Land-Rover with a trailer has pulled out and is crossing our path to make its way into a field opposite. We have time and space to let the farmer complete his manoeuvre without any pressure from us. We brake early and gently. Meanwhile, our friend in the car behind has now seen what we previously anticipated and has dropped back.

The worst case is that the following driver might have tried an overtake and found himself travelling at speed towards at best an emergency stop and at worst a serious collision. He may not thank us for having prevented him from enjoying the open road, but it wasn't as open as he might have thought.

The view now lengthens and the road widens. We let the driver behind us through. He disappears into the distance at pace.

The safety bubble

The two-second rule has a purpose. If we allow a good following distance from trouble ahead, we increase our control of the road. Making time and space for ourselves and for others is the hallmark of *Roadcraft* driving and riding.

Keep safe and go well!

Paul Sheppy

I am Axel, your new treasurer

My name is Axel Thill. I joined in 2013 when I started my Advanced Riding training, and I have been with the Group for eight years. After retirement from the City 10 years ago, I kept myself active as Road Captain, Head Photographer and Treasurer of my Harley-Davidson Chapter in Guildford, called Hogsback Chapter, where I had some interaction with the Thames Valley Group when organising Slow Riding Sessions with Gemma. Slow riding is easier than you think on a Harley.



Like many Members, my sole aim in joining the Group was to become an Advanced Rider or Driver for a professional qualification, or to get a lower insurance premium. In my case, it was for my motorcycle tour operations. Then I read an appeal by our chairman Keith Pruden for a new treasurer. After 12 years, Mike Cowling had decided to move to more distant and scenic parts. I must thank him for the work he did and the fine financial state in which he handed over the Group's finances to me.

Did you know every RoSPA group must have a Treasurer. Otherwise HQ could shut it down. The appeal by Keith was profoundly serious for our survival. For the last four years I have been treasurer of Hogsback Chapter UK, of similar size to the Thames Valley Group, and I admit I love accounting, especially when the operations are of no interest to the taxman. Numbers are either right or wrong, and the sums must add up. And if the taxman does not dictate how to label them and changes the rules constantly, it leaves a lot of creative room, creativity which can be used for the benefit of the Group while keeping its accountability intact.

While riding a motorcycle is not understood by many, it is loved by the enthusiast few. As I am in constant search of new challenges, supporting Keith and Andrew Storey by applying for the treasurer role was an easy call. Did I expect to be elected? NEVER! To my surprise there were no other candidates. So I was not elected but 'confirmed' in the role in November 2020. And after some Committee ZOOM calls, I realised how important it is for more Members to step forward and help the Group's running and operations.

There are many challenges ahead. We need to attract new Members, and we need to qualify more Tutors to train the new Members. And while training is our safety mission, we cannot neglect having fun and entertaining our active and passive Members. I encourage you to step forward to help with cars or bikes. The Committee needs your help and will give you a warm welcome. As your new treasurer, I will do my best to support and finance your creative ideas.

Five myths about electric cars

EVs are improving with every new model. Worries about range, reliability and production are fading. The charging infrastructure in the UK, admittedly, is painfully slow and may take years to complete, but an EV could still be right for you. Not convinced? Here are some myths around these cars which might be delaying you from driving one.

EVs do not have sufficient range That was true when there were only a few EVs, but even the least expensive EVs nowadays provide more than 125 miles on a fully charged battery. Once you get above the £35,000 price tag there are many to choose from with a range in excess of 250 miles, including the entire Tesla line-up, the VW iD3 and iD4 and Hyundai Kona Electric. There are now well over 100 different models on sale.



EVs are only good in the city Some believe that EVs are best for city dwellers, who have no worries about range, but city dwellers might not need a car at all with public transit and bicycles for commuting. City parking can also be difficult with few chargers at blocks of flats. **On the other hand**, EVs make sense in the suburbs, which may not have public transport. Chargers can also be installed at home. Suburban and commuter town homes usually have garages or driveways. There are likely to be charging stations too at railway stations, supermarkets and service stations.

Batteries are wasteful and difficult to recycle When a battery requires replacement, it is not useless. Energy companies are using redundant EV batteries for energy storage from solar panels and wind turbines. General Motors, Nissan, Hyundai, and BMW are all working towards finding a new life for old batteries. Additionally, components such as lithium can be recycled and used in new ones.

EVs are too expensive There is more competition in selling EVs now, with *fairly* affordable options from Hyundai, Kia, and Volkswagen. While it sounds silly to call a car at around £30,000 ‘affordable’, there are incentives to shave thousands off the price. The car makers are keen to get cars on the road to promote sales, and profits have been pared to a minimum. Incentives and freedom from road taxes may not last.

EVs won’t make a difference in the long run Some remain sceptical of seeing any benefit from greener forms of transport apart from the goal of cutting CO2. The reality is that significant differences *will* be felt in the long run. Cleaner air will help improve the nation’s health. Air pollutants, such as NOx, contribute markedly to health issues, including heart and lung disease. The switch to EVs will cut death and sickness in our cities.

Artura, the best McLaren yet?

The McLaren Artura is an unlikely car to be a plug-in hybrid, but from the chassis to the unusual powertrain to the onboard technical details and beyond it is marvellous. McLaren's make supercars, and the Artura is more super than most.



The floor pan is one that will underpin the next generation of McLaren cars. It was built at the company's Composites Technology Centre from super-formed aluminium and carbon fibre. McLaren claims that it is stronger and safer than the company's previous monocoque chassis. On-the-road the Artura weighs just 1.5 tons, about the same as a Porsche 911 Carrera, which is impressive considering there is a plug-in hybrid powertrain with heavy batteries.

The Artura is McLaren's first hybrid. At the heart of this plug-in set-up is a new 3-litre twin-turbo V6 engine, known as the M630, which produces 577 BHP and 585 Newton metres of torque. In addition, there is an electric motor powered by a 7.4-kilowatt-hour battery, providing an extra 225 Newton metres of torque. That all adds 670 BHP and 810 Newton metres of torque.

With power such as this, it is no surprise the Artura's performance is astounding. McLaren says the Artura can accelerate from 0 to 60 mph in 3 seconds, from 0 to 124 mph in 8.3 seconds and from 0 to 186 mph in 21.5 seconds, although, other than on a track, you would not be able to put that to the test. The Artura's top speed is electronically limited to 205 mph, and the car can bring itself to a halt from 124 mph in just 126 feet.

The power runs through an eight-speed sequential automatic gearbox, and, surprisingly, there is no reverse gear. The electric motor deals with any reversing that has to be done. The Artura is rear-wheel-drive with an electronic locking differential, and there are Comfort, Sport and Track driving modes. Comfort will largely keep the engine switched off at speeds below 40 mph, but Sport and Track leave the V6 fired up at all times. A further Electric mode decouples the engine from the transmission, allowing for full-EV operation.

If you are familiar with McLarens, you will be pleased to hear that you no longer have to push an Active button on the console to switch between the modes as you do on McLaren's current cars.

The 7.4-kWh battery allows the Artura to be driven under full electric power, but just for 19 miles, and even that seems optimistic. It can travel at speeds up to 81 mph on electric power alone, though doing so will obviously decrease your range. The battery, however, can recuperate energy from the engine to charge it on the go, and McLaren says it should take about 2.5 hours to get to an 80 per cent charge on a Level 2 plug. What that means is you need access to a charger rated at 40 amps. McLaren provides a six-year/50,000-mile battery warranty.

While the majority of hybrids and EVs use regenerative braking to put energy back into the battery, McLaren left this out of the Artura. ‘There is no function to regenerate the battery through the vehicle’s braking system,’ McLaren says. ‘The engine can provide sufficient charging, and this ensures that feel through the brake pedal is entirely consistent.’

The Artura's new suspension consists of dual aluminium wishbones up front and a new upper-wishbone, lower-multi-link arrangement at the rear. Adaptive dampers are found at all four wheels, and the Artura has McLaren’s new Pro-active Damping Control technology that can scan the road ahead and adjust the suspension accordingly.

The Artura rides on Pirelli P-Zero tyres: 235/35s on 19-inch wheels up front, 295/35s on 20-inch wheels at the back. You can choose an optional set of P-Zero Corsa tyres if you do a lot of track driving, and McLaren will provide Pirelli Sottozero winter tyres if you plan to drive to the Alps for a spot of ski-ing.

The car is fitted with carbon-ceramic brakes with aluminium callipers, similar to the ones McLaren already uses. Best of all in the car is the Artura’s perfectly weighted, communicative steering. Despite all the electronic advancements, McLaren has opted to use an older, hydraulic steering set-up for the Artura, meaning that the connection between car and driver will remain intact.

The Artura has a greater number of driver-assistance features than in other McLarens. There is adaptive cruise control, road-sign recognition, lane-departure warning and automatic high beams. Updates, sent via the Internet, will allow McLaren to update continually the Artura’s driver-assistance items as well as any new features.

In the cabin the Artura will have an updated version of McLaren's infotainment system. Called MIS II, this Android-based platform is housed on an 8-inch vertical touchscreen, and features both Apple CarPlay and Android. The Artura costs from £182,500. If you place your order now, you should get one in time for Christmas and, Covid permitting, freedom to travel to the ski slopes.



Confessions of a nervous rider

When recent Committee-talk turned to our USP, it prompted me to reflect on my ‘top takeaways’ from my training over the years. I realised that IAMSAFE had already been helping me in one way or another since my Mod 1, even before I had a copy of *Roadcraft* or knew the acronym. I will never forget the day (Mod 1, attempt 3) when my instructor, who had got to know me quite well over the duration, supportively but firmly told me I needed to clear my head.



The stress levels I was arriving with were not only impacting on my thinking. They were manifesting through my neck, shoulders and arms on to the handlebars, and physically affecting my riding. I realised it had to stop for my own safety, as well as passing the test, and I have been interested in the relationship between well-being and riding ever since.

‘Hang on a minute,’ I hear you say, ‘why ride if you’re that uptight about it?’ Short answer: I loved riding pillion, did the CBT out of curiosity, thinking it might help with ‘pillion skills’, got the bug for riding myself, did my DAS, never looked back... And what keeps me riding is the fact that the fun and satisfaction ultimately outweigh the nerves,

and the more I ride, train and learn, the more rarely the nerves kick in.

In fact, due to the intense focus it demands, my 40-mile commute has become ‘head clearing’ time in itself, a well-being benefit more than an effort. So, with many of us feeling a bit rusty after lockdown and/or approaching re-tests, it seems a good time to revisit what I’ve learned and share my experience. I hope to cover various confidence-related topics over the next few issues, but first, back to the beginning and IAMSAFE.

The first thing to do is reflect before you even leave the house! In fact, every day. How are you feeling? Is anything building up that might distract you? I learned from my Mod1 experience that this isn’t just about your nerves in the moment. It is about anything overloading your head. If I’d had a stressful week at work, I was turning up for lessons and test with much less energy than if I’d had a quiet one, and it would show.

If you’re one of those people who has trouble switching off, it is worth reflecting on what impact this might have on your ‘capacity’ for the planning and decision-making that is key to smooth riding. And, importantly, it is worth some attention and self-care every day regardless of whether you’ll be riding. I can assure you it will mean less to deal with when you’re next heading out and asking yourself ‘AMISAFE?’

Everybody reflects, learns and takes care of themselves in their own way. So I'm not going to pretend I have 'the right answer', but here are some suggestions based on what I have learned:

1. Look in the mirror As well as getting feedback from my Tutors, it's been interesting to look at videos from riding buddies. Body language and posture say a lot, and taking a look at my own was an eye-opener on both my demeanour and road presence.

2. Mindfulness You can't be at your best without it, but it's easy to forget to breathe when you're busy. Fitness training and the Alexander Technique have helped me pay more attention to breathing and develop good habits. Remembering to breathe well helps prevent getting uptight and helps with concentration in difficult situations on the road.

3. Bite-sized bravery Identify what bits of riding you're least confident with, and set yourself a bite-sized goal to build your experience of them little by little. For example, a U-turn isn't essential when I arrive home, but I aim to do one because it's a frequent opportunity in a quiet spot, and I know I'd put off practising otherwise.

4. Discuss Don't be shy to let your Tutor know any elements of riding that you are nervous about, or when you feel like you just 'don't get' something you've been trying to learn. These factors may well be exacerbating each other and you might be surprised at how many different ways your Tutor will find to explain and help you with the same thing. One of them will 'click' and your head will feel clearer, and your riding smoother, as a result.

5. Tackle the baggage If your stress level is high generally, regardless of whether you're riding or not, you may be more susceptible to nervousness striking and it is worth considering professional help to tackle it. Even taking a few tips from the NHS website could make a difference. Your workplace may also have some well-being services you could tap into.

6. Flappy duck To check yourself mid-ride try fidgeting, considering whether you are gripping too tight, shrugging your shoulders and 'flapping' your elbows (not all at once, and all while retaining control of course). You'll notice if you're tense and it can help ease it. Take a break for a few minutes if the flappy duck isn't enough.



Next issue:

All weather riding
and the challenges of being short

Samantha Appleyard
Membership Secretary

Could you lead a ride-out?

Have you passed your Advanced Motorcycle Test? If so, why not join us on one of our monthly Group outings? It will give you a chance to meet new like-minded people and perhaps learn new skills. Each month the Motorcycle Section of the Thames Valley Group organises a ride-out on the first Sunday. We do so for no other reason other than our love of riding with friendly people who share our interests.



The ride will take you through some very attractive countryside. The destination may be a town or village of some particular interest. We stop for lunch and breaks at pubs and cafés. It could also easily be a petrol station that sells sandwiches. It is the journey and camaraderie that is important.

More often than not, it is our Tutors who organise and lead the rides. But this does not have to be the case, as it often takes the Tutors away from their primary

objective which is Tutoring Associates.

This is where you come in. If you have passed your Advanced Test and would like to put something back into the Group for the benefit of everyone, then why not consider becoming a run leader or back marker? Without both of these positions, rides cannot happen. Full coaching will be given to you both in creating your ride and in managing it on the day. A qualified person will be with you every step of the way, even shadowing you on your rides until both he, or she, and you are comfortable in running your own ride.



All we would ask in return is for you commit to organising at least one ride-out a year. To register your interest, please contact Robin Carlyle at

bikes@roadartvg.org.uk He will arrange for you to have a mentor.

Happy riding!

Graham Knight
Motorcycle Training Officer

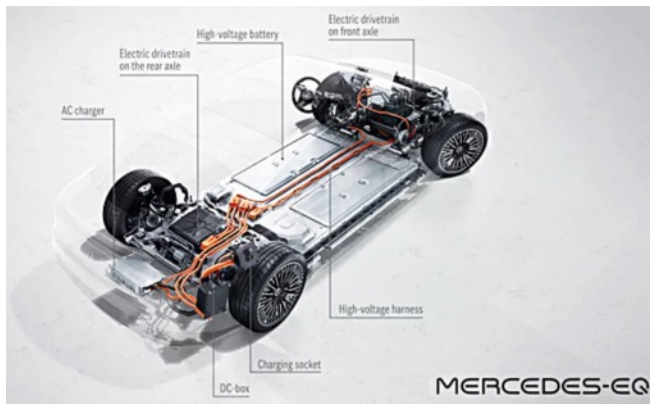
Mercedes builds a new flagship

The upcoming Mercedes-Benz EQS is a battery-powered version of the company's top of the range S-Class. It is a very impressive saloon, despite all the outward film applied to disguise its looks while it undergoes its testing on public roads to discover if it is worthy of the crown. And it needs to be. The S-Class has long been Mercedes-Benz's flagship, the default limousine for top and wealthy people in every part of the world, and while the EQS is not a replacement, it must be held to the same standards. It certainly seems to hit all the right marks.



The EQS has a 107.8 kilowatt-hour battery pack, almost 10 per cent bigger even than the Tesla's. The result is an impressive 480 miles on the European WLTP cycle. The harsher American EPA test cycle will probably come in around the 412 miles similar to that offered by Tesla's current Model S Long Range.

A 0.20 drag coefficient helps achieve that range, making the EQS the most aerodynamic production car on the planet. You can buy it with a single electric motor mounted at the rear axle, which produces 329 BHP, or you can have a second motor up front, increasing the power output to 516 BHP. All that power is ready from the moment your foot touches the accelerator.



The electric motors are extensively isolated from the chassis to reduce the typical EV whine, while double-glazing in the windows and foam-filled body panels will ensure that you get the kind of almost silent gliding ride you expect from an S-Class. However, for those who like some sound from their car while in motion,

Mercedes-Benz will offer a series of Sound Worlds with bespoke tones for acceleration, braking and start-up. Whether any of these will actually enhance the driving experience or just be forgotten as gimmicks is anyone's guess, but it certainly shows the M-B attention to detail.

The EQS is a large car at more than 17ft long. That is about the same as a current S-Class saloon, but, thanks to the addition of rear-wheel steering as standard, it has

a smaller turning circle than a Mercedes C-Class. And, with its air suspension, it is safe to say that the EQS will have a smooth, comfortable ride.

The interior is fabulous. Mercedes's 56-inch Hyperscreen OLED dashboard dominates the scene and is flanked by 15 speakers from Burmeister. That dashboard is actually three separate curved displays, all unified under glass to give both driver and passenger their own interfaces. The effect is stunning to say the least, but exactly how it will all work in practice and not distract the driver remains to be seen. Infotainment systems really need to be experienced and judged while driving.



Another aspect of the car that remains still an unknown is the look. Until testing ends, Mercedes is keeping the body of the EQS under its vinyl wraps. From what we can see, it has a more rounded aerodynamic shape than the current S-Class. But no one will be able to give their verdict until the final sections of camouflage are peeled away.



Regardless of the look, the power, range and sheer luxury of the limousine are plain to see. Add to that a 200-kW charging system capable of adding 186 miles of range in just 15 minutes and you have what looks to be a winner in every department. That just leaves one final question: How much is it going to cost? The answer is as always: If you have to ask, you cannot afford one.

Charging ‘not meeting demand’

Department for Transport (DfT) figures reveal that, while there are now more than 20,000 public electric vehicle charge points in the UK, they are unevenly distributed across the country. The figures, recorded by Zap-Map, show Scotland soaring ahead when it comes to charge points, drawing attention to other parts of the country with far fewer devices.

A total of 4,270 new charge points were installed in 2020, an increase of 26 per cent. Of the 20,775 plug-in points now available, 3,880 have been categorised as ‘rapid’ devices, with a 37 per cent increase in installations in the last year.

The DfT statistics also show that 1,288 charge points were installed in the final three months of 2020 alone, including 350 rapid devices. While this may seem promising, the report says ‘there is uneven geographical distribution of charging devices within the UK.’



In Scotland, there are 40 devices per 100,000 residents, compared to 31 devices per 100,000 in England, 26 in Wales and only 17 in Northern Ireland. And with rapid chargers, there are 5.8 of them per 100,000 people in the UK, but Scotland sees 10 per 100,000 people while Northern Ireland has just 1.1.

The disparity of public charge point installations within England also shows the problem is not just national, but regional. London has 69 public chargers per 100,000 people living in the capital, the most in the UK, whereas the North West, Yorkshire and the Humber have only 19 chargers per 100,000.

RAC spokesman Nicholas Lyes said, ‘Key to encouraging electric vehicle take-up will be drivers’ ability to access a fast and reliable network of public charge points. While many EV drivers will be able to start the day on a full charge, they will come to depend on the network for longer journeys especially, and for anyone without access to their own private charge point, a publicly available network will be essential. It is important that public charging infrastructure mirrors the growth in EV take-up, so that drivers always have access to the type of charging they require.’

EO Charging www.eocharging.com said the data shows that the electric vehicle public charging network is not expanding fast enough to meet growing demand for EVs. It said the 26 per cent increase in public charger installations in 2020 isn’t a match for the 186 per cent rise in electric vehicle sales recorded in the same year, with battery cars now making up 6.6 per cent of all new models bought.

Zap-Map www.zap.map.com will give you a picture of charging points in your area as well as nationally to enable you to decide for yourself if it meets your needs.

Setting the bar for the Boris bus

There is no other bus immediately recognisable and as loved as the big red London double-decker. Most Londoners quickly memorised the numbers of all of them that would take them to the various destinations around the capital. For a vehicle so beloved, well-known, and symbolic all over the world, the older London double-decker does not get much attention these days. It has been succeeded by the more glamorous Boris bus with its enormous windows that replaced the Routemaster and the Bendi Buses, which created mayhem in congested roads.



The red double-decker, with a conductor, smokers upstairs and non-smokers downstairs, represented London as nothing else could. There were plenty of other double-deckers in Britain and elsewhere. Berlin had cream-painted ones, but nothing stood out as the most widely recognised versions, the AEC Regent III RT (*pictured above*) which now is part of London Transport's bus museum. It was introduced in 1939, and succeeded by the AEC Routemaster, which was brought into regular service in 1956.

Neither were intended to be in service as long as they did (the RT through 1979, the Routemaster through 2005). But thanks to numerous advances in their development, and London Transport's very efficient refurbishment programme, they remained around long enough to become inextricably associated with the city.

Other double-deckers have come along since, and red double-decker buses will likely remain a transport mainstay in London, but the RT and Routemaster, which enabled you to board the platform at the rear, both set the bar high enough that no other bus will likely be remembered so well or as fondly.

London Transport Museum is at WC2E 7BB. The nearest Tube station is Goodge Street. For further information: www.ltmuseum.co.uk

What's On - 2021

In line with current restrictions here are our plans for events for June to September 2021.

JUNE

- 6** Tutor Led Ride Out - Gemma
23 Mid Week ride out Car & Motorcycle DRIVE / RIDE OUT:
"Jet Age Museum" events@roadartvg.org.uk
28 Cassington Bike Night Ride Out: events@roadartvg.org.uk
CANCELLED

JULY

- 4** Tutor Led Ride Out - Robin Carlyle
21 – Mid Week ride out Charlbury TT

AUG

- 1** Tutor Led Ride Out - Allan Craven
18 - Mid Week ride out Wessex Wandering

SEPT

- 5** Tutor Led Ride Out - TBA
22 - Mid Week ride out – Jet Age Museum Gloucester

NOTES

- In line with COVID restrictions, for ALL meetings members will need to register in advance. To join ZOOM meetings a link will be sent in an email prior to the meeting
- These events are still subject to approval and compliance with all Covid regulations applying at the time.
- Please refer to the website for further information and also contact the events organiser for the latest information before travelling.

TRAINING

Training is currently very limited due to the constraints of operating under the Covid-19 restrictions. However new Associates may join at any time by contacting the [Membership Secretary](#).

For further information on training please contact the relevant training officer at car-training@roadartvg.org.uk or motorcycle-training@roadartvg.org.uk

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

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NEW

N.B.

Committee e-mail addresses are: xxxxxxx@roadartvg.org.uk
Where 'xxxxxxx' = committee post.



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