

# *Safer Driving*

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

*Winter 2021*



*Going nowhere yet !*

*Photo by Peter Caton*

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## ***Who is who on the Committee?***

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**NOTE: Several of the positions are held temporarily by the current named members.**

**New nominations are sought for these positions - see articles on pages 3 and 18.**

Updated 1/12/21

# The Editor writes...

What strange times we live in. If you want a new car, you may have to wait up to a year for delivery. If you settle for a second hand car, you will discover the price will have risen markedly over the past few months simply because of the shortage of new models. It is all down to computer chips, the vital components nowadays of everything electronic from mobile phones to gaming consoles.

The situation is going to get worse as we move to battery-powered cars unless the manufacture of these components can be vastly increased. A Ford Focus has 300 'chips', more correctly called semi-conductors, whereas an electric model such as the Ford Mustang has 3,000. And each chip has to be accompanied by an electronic sensor for everything from the brakes to the lights.

I discovered in September, when attempting to cross the Channel to France, the drawback about having an all-digital cockpit which offers dozens of permutations of the controls and with visual and warning chimes in a car with the ability almost to drive itself.

I had had an easy passage through British and French passport checks and was parked at the head of the queue ready to board the train. When I tried to start the engine, nothing happened. I even put the key close to the marker on the steering column in case the key's battery had failed, but it was not the battery. I quickly looked at the car handbook and all was revealed. It said that '*electronic failure can be caused by a mobile phone or a transmitter signal*'. When I looked out of the windscreen I spotted the culprit, Eurotunnel's radio mast for communicating with its staff in England and France.

I obtained assistance from Eurotunnel's breakdown crew who had to jack up the car to put 'skids' under each wheel to move it on to a low loader as all four wheels were 'electronically' locked. They transported me and the car by a tunnel under the passport and customs area back to the main car park at the terminal. Once the car was unloaded, it started perfectly, but I was warned not to turn the engine off until I boarded the train. It meant going through the customs again, but no one seemed to notice from the stamp in my passport that I appeared to have already been to France and back.

The problem I had suffered, the breakdown men claimed, occurred intermittently with as many as one in 20 cars, and those most commonly affected were made by BMW and Land-Rover.

My driving holiday in France was trouble free. On my return, I informed BMW and changes were made to computer components so that the wavelength of its electronic signal could be changed as well as on new keys. I hate to think how much it must have cost. A technician worked on the car for three days and even then when I got the car back I had to sign in to it with a new four-figure code and password before I could start to reprogram everything again. Such is progress. I am not sure now I did not actually prefer a key to stick into the ignition and turn it to start the car.

**Max Davidson**

# From the Winter Chair

## I am still seeking my successor

The Group is now back in full swing with both bike and car training up to full speed and most Tutors are fully assigned, which augers well for the future of the Group. The on-line events have continued to be driven forward by David Tomlinson, but I have to express some disappointment that so few suggestions for speakers have been forthcoming from the Membership. I don't believe that you don't have any ideas in this regard. So please pass them on to David who will act on them.

Around 40 Group Members and guests attended a skid pan and outdoor karting event in September. What a pleasure it was to meet people face to face again and to be part of a highly enjoyable day. The event has been universally praised by all who attended, and other events in a similar vein are in planning for 2022 with Group funds already budgeted to support them.

A few words about the AGM in early November. It was back to being a live event this year. We managed to create a quorum from the numbers who attended, but this year's meeting was far short of the last face-to-face AGM in 2019. Nonetheless some important decisions were taken which are covered elsewhere in the *Newsletter* in a report by Andrew Storey, who, until the AGM was the Group secretary.

My personal thanks go to Andy for his three years of service as secretary and to the other Committee Members who stood down either at the AGM or during the past 12 months, Colin Ashley, Samantha Appleyard and Graham Knight. I will also repeat the appeal that has already been sent out for a volunteer to take on the secretary role (currently now temporarily in the hands of Viktor Janvari who is also now the Membership co-ordinator). To date only one person has offered his services and he is still an Associate and so ineligible yet for the role.

Finally for the second time I repeat this will be my final piece as the Chair. I said the same thing 12 months ago, but events changed that plan and I remained in post for a further year.

The constitution allows for the Chair to remain for up to three years. I am now in my fifth and at the AGM I confirmed that I shall step down on 3 December this year. We do not have a replacement in sight, and if none is located prior to the end of December, we shall be seeking permission from RoSPA to run with no Chair until one is found.

If you believe that you can take on the role, please send me an email and we can talk through it. Note that there is no guarantee that RoSPA will allow us to function without a Chair. So we are breaking new ground for TVG if we do go down that path.

***Keith Pruden, Chairman***

# Easy does it if driving an EV

I am now driving my second fully battery-electric car and, not seeing much advice on how to drive them in the context of advanced driving, I am passing on my experiences. I have not driven a hybrid. So these observations relate only to EVs or hybrids that are operating in battery mode.

Battery EVs do not have a traditional transmission or gearbox, although there are a small number, such as Porsche and Audi, with a transmission but not one that the driver can control. With this in mind, the driver of an EV cannot take control as you may do with an automatic or dual clutch gearbox. EVs do, however, offer compensation in other ways.

EVs make use of regenerative braking systems. These recoup the energy that occurs when the car is slowing down, either with or without braking, and effectively turn its electric motors into generators. They top up the car's battery, improving its range, while slowing the car as if the brake pedal had been pressed.

The level of regenerative braking varies between cars and can be set in some cases by the driver from light to vigorous. When used correctly, this system can remove the need to use the brakes by more than 90 per cent. It also aids smooth driving and reduces wear and tear on the car. I read of one Tesla owner in the USA whose car having done 96,000 miles was still on its original brake pads and discs, thanks mainly to regenerative braking.

This aspect of an EV is also why having control of the gears is less important than in an automatic/dual clutch car. Gently lifting off the accelerator has a similar effect to changing down a gear. When an EV activates regenerative braking, the brake lights will usually come on to warn following drivers that the car is slowing.

The new Kia EV6 allows control of the regenerative braking system via steering wheel paddles. You may decide to select firm braking on entering a sharp curve or steep downhill section of road. Some think this is a gimmick, but others welcome the additional control and enhanced driver interaction. From what I have read, the system works reasonably well, and I would expect to see the same approach being adopted by other manufacturers.

Although the regenerative braking system offers major benefits and almost allows one pedal operation via the accelerator, there are things to bear in mind. Be aware and make no assumptions about regenerative braking. If the battery is already fully charged, the system will not apply full regenerative braking, but perhaps at a much lower level. Expect the car to warn you when such circumstance arise. In my Tesla there is a warning displayed that regenerative braking is not currently available.

As a driver in an EV you will notice immediately that lifting your foot off the accelerator pedal does not begin to slow the car as you would normally expect and in fact it may not slow down at all. So vigilance is needed and the brakes should be used and applied until the battery's charge has fallen sufficiently for regenerative braking to start again. The same applies to lifting your foot to slow down instead of

using manual override on the transmission. When regenerative braking is not 100 per cent available, you lose that additional level of control.

With no transmission, the five phases of car control in most EVs are effectively reduced to four: observation, position, speed, acceleration, the exception being the Kia EV6 with its regenerative control displacing the gear phase. With most other four-phase EVs the driver is still able to balance the car in corners, for example, by using acceleration sense and regenerative braking (when available). Smooth operation of the accelerator pedal is essential when cornering, even more so than with a petrol or diesel engine.

Always keep in mind that a suddenly lifting your foot off the accelerator can slow the car rapidly due to regenerative braking, throwing the car's weight forward and potentially creating oversteer. Conversely accelerating too harshly can create wheel-spin, due to the instant torque available from the electric motors, potentially destabilising the car and inducing understeer.

In my experience, the 'slow in fast out' approach works best with electric cars which are generally quite heavy with a low centre of gravity. Some have four-wheel drive and, as with most cars, are set up to understeer. So once again smooth use of the throttle will help create a more balanced exit from a corner.

The need for speed awareness is vital with EVs as there is little in the way of increase in noise levels associated with increasing speed compared to internal combustion engine cars. It is quite easy with the rapid acceleration available to reach and exceed posted speed limits. So be extra vigilant.

One benefit of the need to recharge the batteries is that it compels you to take a break. My Model 3 Tesla can add around 180 miles of range at a Supercharger station in around 30 minutes. This is just about enough time to have a coffee and a bite to eat at a service station, and then get back into the car refreshed to complete a long journey.

Yes, you need extra time for the journey, but having completed many long drives now, I have found the forced break to be beneficial and relaxing. Some may think that I am trying to rationalise one of the negative aspect of a battery EV, but this is just my personal view.



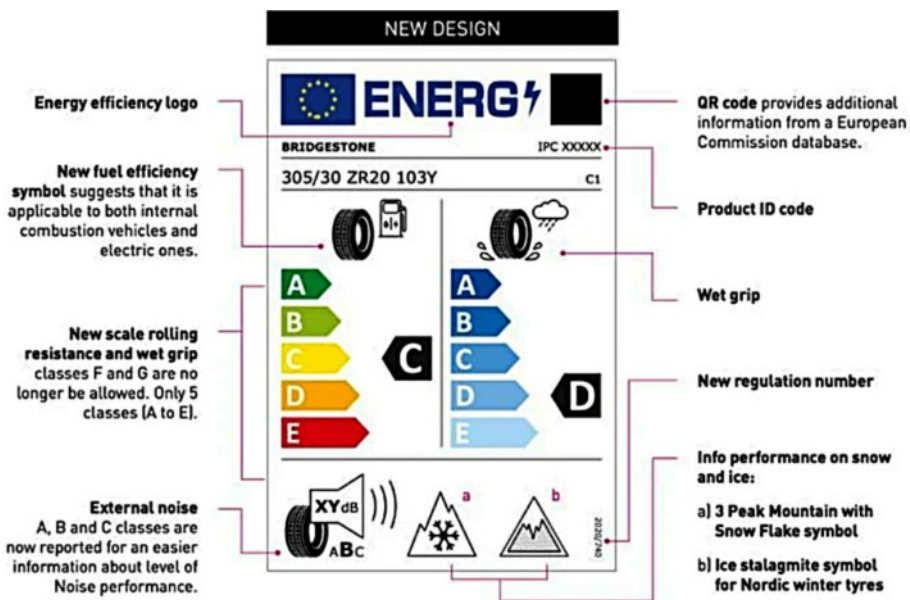
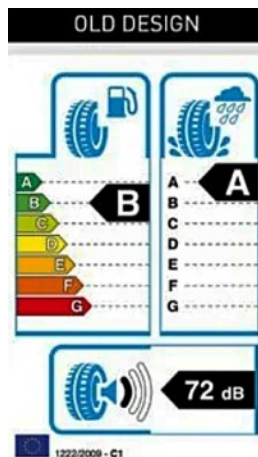
***Keith Pruden,  
Chairman***

# Does your car need new tyres?

If you have not done so already, now would be a good time to assess your tyres. Without tyres in good condition inflated to the correct pressures, your car will not perform as well as it should in gripping wet and icy roads and in giving you the miles to a gallon of fuel you expect.

We may have left the EU, but so far as many other things are concerned we are (voluntarily) part of the decision making of the other nations. From May 2021 all new car, 4x4, and SUV tyres manufactured carry a new EU tyre label which is similar to the energy stickers that appear on washing machines, dishwashers, fridges and freezers.

Since all tyre companies have their own method of construction, no two tyres are the same. So each make is assessed and given a rating on the EU tyre label to provide you with comparable information about each tyre, be it Bridgestone, Michelin, Good Year or Continental etc, so that you can make a more informed choice.



The principal aim of the label is to improve road safety since defective tyres play a part in a many accidents. The decibel element on the label also influences

the environmental impact of road transport in the hope that noise will be reduced. In this respect it is likely to fail due to the rough surface of most of our roads.

Every make of tyre is assessed for three vital qualities. The first is **rolling resistance**, which is fundamental to getting most miles per gallon. To simplify things for you, in tests it has been shown that the difference in fuel consumption in a car fitted with 'A rated' tyres compared to E can be as much as 80 litres for the average motorist. That could give you a saving of £120 a year at current fuel prices.

Next comes **wet grip**. You might wish to choose a tyre with the best wet grip over economy. It certainly should be a priority as such a tyre gives shorter braking distance on wet roads and avoids aquaplaning.

Remember too that you have a choice of all-season tyres and summer tyres. Summer tyres are the standard fit on most British cars. Others have all-season tyres which give a marginally better grip on winter roads, but for the best of all worlds you would need winter tyres between October and March and summer tyres for the rest of the year.

This is only worthwhile in areas where the temperature between October and March is below 8C and you are doing a lot of miles on icy or snow covered roads. In some countries in Europe, such as Germany, the main stipulation for tyres in winter is that they should have a minimum of 3mm tread. In colder areas winter tyres are mandatory.

Finally we get a decibel assessment of **the noise the tyre makes**. The value of this in Britain is difficult to quantify as even the very best tyres make a racket on sections of concrete surfaced motorway whereas most tyres are perfectly acceptable on smooth asphalt.

When you go to buy tyres, you will find some described as '**symmetrical**' because the tread pattern on the inside matches the pattern on the outside of the tyre.

'**Asymmetric**' tyres feature a different pattern on the inside and outside of the tyre which makes them able to perform well in dry and wet conditions. You will see '**outside**' marked on the side of such tyres. Asymmetric tyres are the best all-round tyres and are well worth the additional cost.

Finally the **sidewalls** of all tyres show the **width** of the tyres in millimetres, the **aspect ratio** shown as a percentage of the width of the tyre (the lower the percentage the less you will be cushioned from the road), the **rim size** in inches and the **maximum speed** permissible for the tyre shown as V, W or Y.

If you replace two tyres, always put the new ones on the powered wheels and ensure that all your tyres are the same make, particularly if on the same axle. Tyres should be replaced when the tread has worn down to 3mm. Do not let them get down to the legal minimum of 1.6mm.



# The Examiner

## Simple key to giving a good drive

In the last two editions I have covered the requirements of the POWDER checks and the cockpit drill. Now to the core of the test, the drive itself. To cover each element of *Roadcraft* is not possible in these articles as the good book now contains almost 300 pages. However, the basis of the drive can be summed up in three words.

Above all the drive must be **SAFE, SMOOTH, SYSTEMATIC**. These three elements are interlinked and flow from each other. A systematic drive, in accordance with the principles of *Roadcraft*, will create more time and space to plan and deal with hazards. More time and space produces greater safety margins and allow the drive to be undertaken smoothly.

As an examiner it is easy to say relax, but I think that really is a key part of producing a good drive. Although it is a test, I prefer to put it to candidates that it is an *'opportunity to show how you can drive.'*

I will always make notes during the drive. No positive or negative connotation should be taken when notes are made. The notes are for my benefit in order to provide what I hope is a comprehensive and accurate debriefing at the end of the test. This is where smoothness comes into play again, because if the drive is smooth, my notes are neater and I have more chance of deciphering them at the end!

Remember, your examiner has been through several driving tests during their police service and we were as nervous as you. We can feel your pain – sorry excitement!

One way that some candidates relax more while driving is to talk to themselves. This is not a sign of madness and can help the examiner to ascertain where you are looking, what you have seen and how you are going to deal with a hazard. If this helps your drive, please feel free to do it and don't feel inhibited. Even if a candidate makes comments to themselves in this way the examiner may still ask for a more formal commentary.

With regard to the commentary, unless you are taking a diploma test or similar a full commentary is optional. However, as well as being asked to identify hazards the candidate may be asked to explain their use of the system when approaching and negotiating a hazard.

Candidates sometimes ask if they should plan a route for the test. Examiners have no fixed routes but are free to devise routes of their own. Sometimes assistance from the candidate is sought if I am testing in an unfamiliar area. Adopt the principle of following the road ahead unless/until given a direction. Do not worry if a mistake is made and a wrong turn taken. That just gives you the chance to showcase your reversing skills, or for the examiner to think quickly of an alternative route back to the start.

Enjoy your driving and stay safe.

**Mark Smith**

# Observation Post

## Practice makes permanent

A couple of years ago (BC – Before Covid), I had a young Associate who was a top-level skier. It was easy to work with a person who spent much of his time with coaches who were helping him to develop his downhill skills. He was used to his performance being put under the microscope and having the smallest details scrutinised.

At the end of one drive, we were discussing what practice he needed to undertake for the next week's session. He kept asking for more and more clarification of what the goal was and how it might be achieved. And then he said these magic words: *'Practice doesn't make perfect; it makes permanent.'* I was transfixed, and asked him where he had heard that. He told me that Tim Henman had told him. He knew the tennis star quite well, and Henman had told my Associate that if practice was not accurate and focussed it simply reinforced the error that proper practice was designed to eliminate.

### Details matter

Another window on practice was thrown open when Michael Johnson (double Olympic gold medallist at 200 and 400 metres) talked about his recovery from a stroke. He was on a panel commentating on some World Championship athletics and was asked by other panellists how he had recovered so completely.

He replied that when he was a young emerging athlete and throughout his career, he had got used to measuring his performance in his track events by hundredths of a second. He knew how much work was needed for the next improvement and was elated when that elusive hundredth came off his times. In recovering from the stroke, the tiny improvements were part of his determination and confidence that he would return to his former level of fitness. Something he clearly achieved.

Whether we are bikers or drivers, there is always the risk that we see the advanced test as an arrival point. We take the test, we pass, we've arrived. And many of our Associates have that mindset.

Well, we know one thing for sure: their *Roadcraft* skills will move to another level and they will become safer and better riders and drivers. That in itself is a good outcome.

But there is more. Some people see that they have begun a journey they want to continue. So they stick around. They hone their skills and try to find ways to become even better.

### Departure point 1

One way of doing this is to become a Tutor. There is no surer way of maintaining and improving your skills than to coach others in *Roadcraft*. As you see their faults and mistakes, you catch yourself doing similar things and you work harder to eradicate them. As a Tutor, you have to look and think further ahead than your Associate, and your observation skills are sharpened. Since about 90 per cent of *Roadcraft* is observation, you develop your own mastery of the art.

The test becomes a gateway to greater finesse and competence.

## Departure point 2

Another way of making progress in *Roadcraft* is to find coaches who will take you further forward. In my case, this has been through those who have qualified as advanced instructors with the police.

RoSPA examiners have all qualified as advanced police riders or drivers. Some have done both. They are *Roadcraft* experts and have mastered the arts of the road. So their instructors are going to be very special. Getting to one of these wizards (often now retired from operational police duties) is a special experience. Fortunately, there are a good number of them out there and they will help you to sharpen and polish the skills you have already gained.

## Incompetence and competence

One of the groups I belong to talks about levels of competence in driving. The same comments apply for riders.

**UNCONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE** is bad news. Drivers are simply unaware that much of what they do is flawed. Unfortunately, many of them hold a licence which they obtained years ago and have treated as an arrival point. They have passed the test and have done no more training since that time. Errors and misjudgements have crept back in which would probably lead to their failure should they try to take the L-plate test again.

**CONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE** is where we all start. We know that we haven't got it right, and we struggle as we learn to correct our errors. It takes a great deal of application and concentration.

**CONSCIOUS COMPETENCE** is the first step towards mastery. We acquire skills, but we have to keep an active check on what we are doing to maintain a good level of performance. Most advanced drivers and riders experience this inevitable phase of development. Some stay there.

**UNCONSCIOUS COMPETENCE** is the hallmark of high-level *Roadcraft*. The System is simply the natural way of operating. It is not that it is unthinking, but it is simply effortlessly in place. Our concentration is left for the details of the journey and for hazard awareness, when IPSGA (Information-Position-Speed-Gear-Acceleration) kicks in.

Not all of us will achieve a Gold grade on test. But the Bronze or Silver candidate who keeps working at improvement is (in my view) a better prospect than the Gold who has 'arrived'.

## Practice makes permanent

Keep working at it. But make sure that your practice doesn't just dig you deeper into the rut. Remember that, if the rut gets too deep, it could be your grave – or someone else's.

Keep safe and go well. Wishing you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

**Paul Sheppy**

# Westward Ho! in all its glory

In a previous piece I wrote for the *Newsletter* I showed you the statue of Charles Kingsley that stands by the entrance to Victoria Park in Bideford. He is remembered locally as he lived here when he wrote his famous book *Westward Ho!* and also for the fact that in 1865 a local seaside tourist village was developed and named after the book, giving it the distinction of being the only place in the British Isles with an exclamation mark in its name. Because of this Kingsley connection, when we visited Westward Ho! this summer we were surprised to see a display board about Rudyard Kipling. However, it seems that he was a pupil at the United Services College in Westward Ho! from 1878 to 1882. A display board is on the promenade near to a row of beach huts which have the words to *If* set in cobbles in the path in front of them.

## Rudyard Kipling 1865-1936

 Kipling was born in 1865 in Bombay, India, the son of John Lockwood Kipling and Alice Kipling. His mother moved him to England in 1871 for a formal British education. Initially he went to foster carers in Southsea where he experienced bullying and abuse from his foster mother. This was an unhappy time for Kipling where he was subjected to bullying and violence at the place he would call the 'House of Desolation'.

 Fortunately in 1878 his mother moved him to the United Services College, Westward Ho!, a school founded to prepare boys for life in the British Army. This however was not the case for Kipling, as fortunately his headmaster and family friend fostered his literary ability which enabled his writing to flourish. It was this time in Kipling's life that provided the setting for his novel *Stalky and Co.* Kipling left the United Services College in 1882 and became one of the most popular writers of the 19th and 20th centuries, rewarded for his efforts with a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1907, the youngest recipient to date (as of 2017).

 Adorned across the Westward Ho! Promenade in front of the beach huts is the first verse of Rudyard Kipling's world-renowned poem, 'If'. The poem was written by Kipling in 1895 and first published in 1910 in his collection of short stories and poetry entitled *'Rewards and Fairies'*. It is written in the form of paternal advice towards his son, John, listing virtues that will transform his son into a man. How many of these virtues are still valid today?

**If**

**I**f you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise.

If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!

For the complete poem:  
Scan the QR code here or  
go to [www.torridge.gov.uk/kipling](http://www.torridge.gov.uk/kipling)



In keeping with its original developer's philosophy, Westward Ho! is still a thriving tourist location. Places to stay include some modern luxury apartments with grand sea views. But the most popular is Braddick's Holiday Park with its adjacent Pier House restaurant, where we had a very tasty lunch.



Venturing a bit further afield and away from the crowds, we make a point of visiting the tiny cliff-top village of Bucks Mills. This was said to have been established by the survivors of a shipwrecked Spanish galleon who married the local girls and formed a self-sufficient community hostile to newcomers. Perhaps that is why you must park in a small clearing in the woods on the edge of the village and make your way on foot.



Passing a number of old cottages you will eventually reach the old village centre and find a small path leading to the beach below.

A short way down this path you will find a tiny cabin perched on the edge of the cliffs. This was used as a studio from the 1940s by the artists Judith Ackland and Mary Stella Edwards.

It is now owned by the National Trust who continue to let it out to local artists. However, as might be expected from this idyllic location, it is



already fully booked for several years.

The narrow path then continues past the cabin down the side of the cliff towards the rocky beach.

This is a small rocky cove where those Spanish sailors would have been able to land their rowing boats after their galleon had been shipwrecked. Looking to our right, further across Barnstaple Bay we can see Saunton Sands in the far distance.

Looking to our left we can see the end of the cliff path and



beyond that the bay sweeping westwards to the tip of Hartland Point, from where the coastline turns through a right angle to head southwards on its journey to Land's End.

Roughly centre of the view we can see the tourist haven of Clovelly, seen better in this telephoto shot below.

The steep cobbled street



through the village to the harbour was formerly only accessible by foot or donkey, but there is now a side track enabling goods to be transported by 4x4's.

So now back to Bideford and the river Torridge, where we continue the maritime theme. Moored alongside Victoria Park are a number of old vessels. Seen here is the SS Freshspring which is recognised as being a vessel of National Importance, currently being restored by the Steamship Freshspring Trust. Originally built in 1946 as a water carrier, it is now being converted to carry passengers and for use as a training ship for cadets. When we were there, it was



a hive of activity by the volunteers. More information can be found on their website <https://ssfreshspring.co.uk/>

Near to the Freshspring is another old vessel which has been converted into a floating cafe where teas and ices can be found at very reasonable prices. However, the best way to enjoy your visit to Bideford is to make your way back to the entrance to Victoria Park to buy yourself one of Hockings famous dairy ices. I went for the double scoop



topped with clotted cream...delicious.

But watch out for the seagulls!

**Peter Caton**



# Tesla's Autopilot under scrutiny

Tesla and the United States National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are not as the Americans would say exactly in lockstep with one another, following an investigation into the carmaker's Autopilot system that began earlier this year. However, the NHTSA is once again asking Tesla for more information, this time relating to its potential failure to send out a recall notice about a fault.



NHTSA sent a letter to Tesla's director of field quality, Eddie Gates, asking if the car maker should have filed recall documents when issuing an over-the-air update for Autopilot. This update, according to NHTSA's letter, provided updates to the system that help Teslas better identify emergency vehicles parked on the side of a road. NHTSA opened an investigation into these types of crashes earlier this year which would tend to indicate that the guidance system had flaws.

'Any manufacturer issuing an Internet update that mitigates a defect that poses an unreasonable risk to motor vehicle safety is required to file an accompanying recall notice to NHTSA,' the letter reads in part. NHTSA said in an additional statement it also wants to learn more about a reported non-disclosure agreement program between the carmaker and early Full Self-Driving beta testers.

'The information request letter asks the company to provide information about its recent update to Autopilot software which Tesla claims improves detection of flashing emergency lights at night,' a NHTSA spokesperson said.

The law in the United States requires carmakers to report a safety defect within five business days to NHTSA via recall notices and documents. Should Tesla continue to remain silent on this latest issue, the agency will take court action and levy \$114 million in civil fines, the letter said.



# Roads are now beyond repair

Almost a fifth of local roads are now in such poor condition, it is claimed, that they will need to be rebuilt in the next five years. It is no longer a matter of simply repairing potholes. These roads have disintegrated to such a state that they will need to be dug up and then re-laid with bottoming and a new surface.



It is estimated that 35,000 miles of high streets, residential and country roads will need major repairs in the next five years and, of these, at least 18,500 miles of roads are in such disrepair that they may need urgent work within the next 12 months.

Road workers now on average fill a pothole every 19 seconds on local authority-controlled roads. In the past years they have filled 1.7 million potholes, which can be deadly for cyclists and can damage a car's wheels, tyres, shock absorbers and suspension.

The study of the state of Britain's roads was carried out by the Asphalt Industry Alliance. It also revealed that local roads outside of London are resurfaced only after 83 years on average compared to similar roads in the capital which are resurfaced every 32 years.

It is estimated that it would cost £10 billion just to clear the current backlog of basic maintenance required on local roads in England and Wales. The cost of rectifying the severely damaged roads has not been calculated.

Over the past year, there has been a 15 per cent increase in budgets for repairing roads, partly due to the Government's £2.5 billion Pothole Filling Fund, but the overall expenditure on road repairs was still lower than it was two years ago. The industry study noted that the fund has had an adverse effect on the condition of roads by concentrating on short-term pothole filling, rather than longer-term solutions such as re-laying and resurfacing roads.

# A perfect fit for a short rider

In the Autumn issue of the *Newsletter*, Samantha Appleyard, 5ft 3in-ish tall, wrote about *The Trials of being a short rider*. Here is a motorcycle which should fit her to perfectly as well as enabling her to cut a dash on those Group ride-outs. It is a 1974 custom-built Harley Davidson Ironhead Pro Street and it comes painted in Lamborghini pearl tangerine.



It has been totally renovated. From the crank pin to the rocker boxes everything is top of the line brand new. The cylinder heads have Sifton valves new guides and stainless steel seats, Wisco pistons, Sifton solid push rods and tappet blocks. There is a heavy duty starter, lithium battery, kick start and as well as electric. The gear change has been shifted to the left side of the bike, and gears on the right side transfer through a jack shaft to the left side. This bike really is unique. The clutch lever has been made to perfection. There is also a turn signal switch on it with a small led that reminds you that the turn signal is on. All of this is linked to a brand new Barnett Scorpion clutch.

The drive chain is lubricated by passing through an oil reservoir. There are what Harley enthusiasts call 'floor boards' extending from the footrests to make your riding experience more comfortable. Our Harley-Davidson expert, the Group Treasurer Axill Thill is sure to give advice on this matter and the art of Harley riding. The Ironhead Pro Street handles like a sport bike, and, fitted with Cobra 200 tyres, it lets you manoeuvre at will unlike a bike fitted with the monster 300s.

There are other items of interest. The exhaust is a true 2 into 1 into 2 exhaust. Exhaust heat shields are formed to fit the diameter curvature of the pipes. Turn signals are in the seal beam. The ignition switch is located on the front left side of the frame towards the bottom and it is set up like a car ignition. Just turn the key start the engine.

There is one snag about this special bike and that is the asking price of \$55,000. Sorry Samantha. Still one can still dream of what might have been the perfect bike.

# RoADAR TVG AGM 2021

## We need volunteers for the Committee or the Group may not continue

The Annual General Meeting of RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders: Thames Valley Group was held on Thursday 18 November at Reading Rugby Club. This was a new venue for us, after having to resort to a virtual AGM via Zoom last year. Eighteen members attended from both car and motorcycle sections and heard summary reports from the Chair, Membership Secretary, Treasurer, Car and Bike Training Officers and Events Co-ordinator.

Several Committee members are standing down this year, and the posts of Chair, Secretary and Car Training Officer will be covered on a temporary basis until permanent incumbents are available. This is a concern, as the Chair and Secretary roles are mandatory for RoSPA accreditation, and we are keen to introduce some new blood to the Committee.

Despite the challenges of 2021 brought about by the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, we have a healthy membership of 245, including 20 new members joining during the year. Training and testing are now well under way again, though there is quite a backlog of testing, particularly for cars where restrictions lasted longer.

### Put forward your ideas for events

Much of our planned activity was curtailed by the virus, though there was a very successful get together at Thruxton as restrictions were eased, which included go-karting, skid pan and hog roast. However, a more ambitious programme is planned for 2022 and we hope to encourage more members to join us at similar events. David Tomlinson, our Events Co-ordinator would welcome any suggestions for events, visits, speakers, or other activities that you may like to attend.

The AGM is the main conduit for Members to have their say in the running of the Group and I would encourage all to participate in the 2022 AGM where possible. I appreciate that we cover quite a large area geographically and it is not always easy to attend in person. I would therefore be interested in any ideas as to how we might make the AGM more accessible to a wider group of Members. In the meantime, the minutes of the AGM will be published soon on **groups.io**, our preferred platform for internal communications, along with the full reports given by the Committee.

I look forward to seeing you in 2022

***Andrew Storey former Group Secretary***

## A not-so-smart motorway!

On an ordinary motorway, freeway, autoroute, autostrada or autobahn with a hard shoulder a driver has time to match his or her speed to the adjoining lane, something that is absolutely impossible on a so-called ‘smart motorway’ with just a short emergency refuge.

Accidents are likely to happen when vehicles leaving emergency refuge areas are travelling at significantly lower speeds than the vehicles travelling in the adjoining so-called ‘live lane’ of traffic.

Deaths on so-called all-lane-running motorways have exceeded those on conventional motorways over the past two years, according to *Highways Magazine*. As commercial vehicles become larger and heavier, some Continental motorways, such as the busy A26 near Reims, are having regularly spaced emergency refuges constructed *in addition* to the hard shoulder to enable such vehicles to be adequately housed well away from the running lanes.



I happened to come across the road traffic accident shown in this photograph at 3.24 pm on 26 October just prior to the junction 11 eastbound exit on the M4 at one of the emergency refuge areas on this so-called smart motorway. The ‘smart’ refers to the cameras and assorted equipment that allow controllers in some distant control room to respond to the needs of the traffic on the motorway.

What you are unable see in the picture is a Mercedes that has received significant damage after having crashed into the metal barrier and then having spun round so that it ended up facing in the wrong direction on the nearside lane of the M4.

The black Ford 4x4 is blocking your view of the damaged Mercedes from which the occupants were fortunate to escape unscathed.

There were no lane closure warning signs as I approached the accident, resulting in vehicles, including HGVs, swerving across ‘live lanes’ to avoid further collisions with the stationary cars while risking hitting other vehicles travelling in lanes 2 & 3.

The driver of the 4x4, admirably public spiritedly but perhaps foolishly, can be seen standing in the still 'live' lane signalling oncoming traffic of the need to move over.

Thankfully the weather at the time was dry and visibility was good. Goodness knows what would have happened if the crash had occurred at night, or if the weather conditions had led to reduced visibility and increased braking distances.

So why are smart motorways still being implemented when it is becoming apparent that they are raising the risks and are a danger to motorists? Not only is this form of traffic management the cause of additional accidents, but it is also putting drivers' and passengers' lives at risk when their vehicles become stranded in 'live' lanes, where the traffic can be approaching at up to 70 miles an hour.

According to the Automobile Association, the most dangerous part of a conventional motorway is the hard shoulder as stationary vehicles can be hit by other vehicles travelling at speed that have drifted off the carriageway of lane one.

How, I wonder, can it ever make sense to increase this risk further by removing the hard shoulder and making it another live lane on a so called smart motorway. *Smart?* It seem to me more like a foolish thing to do. It may save money, but when it comes to cost versus lives, lives should come first every time.

I put my concerns to *Highways England* which controls the motorways.

*Here is their reply:* Our Regional Operations Centre was aware of the collision at 3:21 pm and lane closures were set on our system at 3:24 pm. There is no record of the collision being caused by a vehicle exiting the emergency area. Each emergency area has a telephone with a direct link to our regional operations centre.

When a driver wishes to exit a bay, he or she should use the emergency phone, so that Red Xs can be set on gantries prior to the emergency area to close lanes with accompanying speed limits and message signs to warn approaching traffic of an emerging vehicle.

We understand your concerns about smart motorways. Safety is our first priority, and England's motorways are among the safest in the world. Smart motorways reduce congestion and provide more reliable journey times on our busiest motorways. They increase capacity and improve performance without the need to widen the road at a significantly reduced cost.

When a stopped vehicle is detected, our operators set a Red X sign to close one or more lanes, adjust speed limits, and deploy traffic officers. This technology was trialled on the M25, and is now on stretches of the M3, M20 and M1 and will be on 'all lane running' motorways by September 2022.

Thank you again for contacting us. We hope this information is useful to you and reassures you that safety is central to the design and operation of smart motorways. For further information, please email our contact centre at [info@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:info@highwaysengland.co.uk).

**Neil Callan**

# 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*

<b>Associate/Member</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Tutor</b>
Simon Haskett	Gold	Diptendra Ghosh
Adam Teskey	Gold	Alan Painter
Keith Pruden	Gold	Retest
Tony Parish	Diploma	Retest
Robin Carlyle	Gold	Mark Kaye

## *Motorcycle Group*

<b>Associate/Member</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Tutor</b>
Nicola Picchi	Gold	Andries an der Watt
Hooman Nili	Silver	Retest

*NOTE: RoSPA car tests have now fully resumed*

Please remember to notify Max Davidson [editor@roadatvg.org.uk](mailto:editor@roadatvg.org.uk)  
or Robin Carlyle [motorcycle-training@roadatvg.org.uk](mailto:motorcycle-training@roadatvg.org.uk) of your Test success.

Please also remember to let us have a note too of any re-Test result.  
Publishing results encourages those Associates who are about to take the Test and gives an indication of how the Group is performing.

# What's On - 2022

In line with current restrictions here are our plans for events for January to April 2022

## JANUARY

- 9** Tutor Led **RIDE OUT**: Ride Leader and destination varies
- 12** **Speaker**: Julie Hardy, Magistrate  
*(online by zoom - see joining instructions below)*
- 20** **Triumph Motorcycles 1902 Cafe**

## FEBRUARY

- 6** Tutor Led **RIDE OUT**: Ride Leader and destination varies
- 24** **Super Sausage Cafe**

## MARCH

- 6** Tutor Led **RIDE OUT**: Ride Leader and destination varies
- 24** **Loomies Cafe**

## APRIL

- 3** Tutor Led **RIDE OUT**: Ride Leader and destination varies
- 21** **Beaulieu National Motor Museum**

**For the online ZOOM meetings members will need to register through  
the link in an email sent prior to the meeting  
In case of changes please refer to the website for latest information.**

## 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](mailto:car-training@roadartvg.org.uk) or [motorcycle-training@roadartvg.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:editor@roadartvg.org.uk)

## REMINDER

The Newsletter is also available online at [www.roadartvg.org.uk](http://www.roadartvg.org.uk)

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<https://roadartvg.groups.io/>

**NEW**

N.B.

Committee e-mail addresses are: [xxxxxxx@roadartvg.org.uk](mailto:xxxxxxx@roadartvg.org.uk)  
Where 'xxxxxxx' = committee post.



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