

## Northampton Advanced Motorists

# Newsletter

Issue 88

Autumn 2010

## From the Chair

John Hodges  
Group Chairman



Did you spot the “deliberate” mistake I wonder? Sorry to those NAM members who received through the post another copy of the *Spring* NAM newsletter, instead of the *Summer* edition! Oops! This was a problem with the printers, but it does highlight an issue we face in producing in fact 2 versions of the newsletter (one third electronic, two thirds printed) each time. The e-newsletter and a printed A5 version sent expensively through the post. We are reviewing this at the moment. E-mail is definitely best for us, but we appreciate that not everyone can or wants to receive it that way. Please, please, please will all NAM members kindly give us your up-to-date e-addresses, especially as we are now finding that a good many sent electronically get returned to us as undeliverable. Whilst on the subject, will all members kindly advise us when they change any contact phone numbers (including mobile numbers). We are obliged

to hold accurate and up to date membership details, so please advise any changes to the Membership Sec. as soon as they become valid. Thank you.

Sad to let you know that former NAM committee member, **Mike Bush** had a fall recently and broke his femur. Mike and his wife Mavis enjoyed coming with us in June on our Tramway Museum visit. Get well soon Mike. Also I'm sad to report that both **Peter Parry** and **Phil De Clermont** are standing down from our Observers' team. Thanks to you all for your help and support and your past efforts for the group do not go unrecognised. On a happier note, I'm pleased to say that both **Sanjay Mehta** and **Roger Loomes** have recently qualified as group observers. Well done. With NAM now in its 32<sup>nd</sup> year, I'm happy to report that we've also recently passed a significant milestone. The other week **Rob Spence** became our **750th** IAM test passer!! Well done Rob! Let me also thank **Mike Saunders** (former Chairman and Chief Observer) whose meticulous record-keeping showed this to be the case! We intend to fully publicise this fact for some up-coming events. Let me thank all the NAM team (past and present) who have put in the work to make the Northampton IAM group the success it is today. Keep it up!!

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On a national note, IAM Chiswick invited all 220 local groups to respond to a special “Quality Assurance Document” by the end of June. Chiswick are rightly concerned about the “delivery” of the Skill for Life programme for new IAM associates at grass roots level and want to improve the “process” in every aspect. Who could possibly disagree with that? At NAM we are pretty happy with our SfL “delivery”, especially as under **Steve Smith** we are able to offer new associates not only high quality on-road training, but also some enhanced training sessions at Northamptonshire Police HQ. Not many other local groups are able to do that thanks to Steve and the on-

going goodwill of Northamptonshire Police. After considerable committee deliberation we made our reply to Chiswick by the deadline. It was a lengthy reply. More of that perhaps in our next newsletter.

Look inside for one or two events coming up. Thank you **BJ** for organising our recent trip to Crich. Our friends at Milton Keynes Advanced Motorists (*MKAM*) are arranging a skid-pan event a Silverstone on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. NAM members are also welcome. Also another Millbrook session arranged for Saturday October 30<sup>th</sup>. See inside for details if you're interested. As a group we will be running a "Better Motorway Driving Day" open to both members and the public at PHQ on Sunday October 17<sup>th</sup> (*busy month October!*). Details not yet finalised but contact **Steve Smith** if you'd like a session or are available to assist manning our MOC that day. We intend to fully publicise this event in advance as we did the Daventry Road Safety event last September. We expect a good response.

We've recently added a couple of Chris Gilbert's excellent ultimate driving craft DVDs to our group library. It's an excellent training video which also includes some high speed "blues and twos" stuff. You may remember that Chris was our AGM guest speaker back in 2007. If you'd like to borrow a copy then please contact **Maggie Lloyd** (*the 2010 Northampton In Bloom, Best Back Garden winner! – Well done Maggie*). £10 deposit secures a lend. Well worth seeing how good commentary assists driving standards and what levels of driving excellence can be achieved with practice.

Let me conclude by once again thanking our NAM committee members and our excellent training team under **Steve Smith** for all your efforts. 30+ years of group road safety activity is no mean feat and to recently clock up our 750<sup>th</sup> test pass is just superb. Well done **Northampton Advanced Motorists!!**

Finally, if you do accidentally receive another copy of the *Summer* NAM newsletter instead of this *Autumn* one then I profusely apologise in advance! Enjoy your late summer motoring fellow members on our busy roads by driving safely, systematically, smoothly and skilfully. Remember the IAM badge you've got on the front of your car! More NAM news next time.

**John Hodges**  
*Chairman, Northampton Advanced Motorists*

## Do you remember .....

Your Group is over 30 years old, and there must be many of you out there that have interesting memories of the Group. We are looking to put together an article for the next newsletter, so please contact the editor of you have any anecdotes.

## Test Passes

The following associates have passed their Advanced Motoring test since the last newsletter. Many congratulations to all of you.

**Mike Habib**  
**Paul Smith**  
**Rob Spence**

## Caption Competition Results



*So, what is Brian Saying ?*

Winner: **Peter Davey**

**Brian sings "Just one Cornetto for the lady"**

Runner up: **Colin Tarry**

**He isn't saying anything – he's gone to sleep with his arm in the air.**

## Important Diary Dates

### **Motorway Day, Northampton – 17<sup>th</sup> October 2010, 10:00 hours onwards**

The Group is running a motorway driving day on the 17<sup>th</sup> October for members of the public. The day will include giving demonstrations and undertaking assessments on the motorway (Northampton M1) from 10:00 hours onwards. It is anticipated that the starting point will be Police Headquarters drive. To enable this event to be successful, we need as many observers as possible to help.

If you are interested in helping on this day, please contact let John Norrie who will provide further details.

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*The Group have had the following invite from Milton Keynes:*

### **Milton Keynes Advanced Motorists (MKAM) Skid day at Silverstone - 23rd October 2010**

Ever felt that initial adrenaline rush and then complete fear when sliding out of control? How about the overwhelming satisfaction of taking command of your vehicle and steering your way out of trouble? Well, this is your chance! It unleashes the thrill of skidding and sliding, whilst instilling you with the knowledge and confidence to make you a better driver. It's one of the most enjoyable learning experiences you'll ever have, at one of the world's most renowned driving venue!

90 minutes sessions with 3 people in each car with instructor (each person gets 20-25 minutes driving)

Cost £70 for members; £84 for non members, saving up to £29 on Silverstone rates.

Please contact the Milton Keynes Group direct using [Louise@mkam.co.uk](mailto:Louise@mkam.co.uk)

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### **Insight & Track Day, Millbrook Proving Ground – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2010**

Another chance to book a place for an exciting Insight and Track Day at the Millbrook Proving Ground, near Bedford (see Spring newsletter). The cost of the event is £100 per person, and for your money you will get a fantastic day including: a drive round the High Speed Bowl at 120 mph, the famous Alpine track and the Straight mile.

Contact the Chairman, John Hodges (01327 872953) to register your interest.

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### **Check and Assessment Drives**

These normally take place on the **first Sunday** of each month at **Midsummer Meadow Car Park**, Bedford Road, Northampton (Near Avon Cosmetics and Becketts Park). Note: alternative venue in exceptional circumstances is the Borough Council offices front car park, Cliftonville. The sessions are **09:30** and **11:00** hours.

**5<sup>th</sup> September 2010**

**5<sup>th</sup> December 2010**

**6<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

**5<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

**3<sup>rd</sup> October 2010**

**2<sup>nd</sup> January 2011**

**3<sup>rd</sup> April 2011**

**3<sup>rd</sup> July 2011**

**7<sup>th</sup> November 2010**

**6<sup>th</sup> February 2011**

**1<sup>st</sup> May 2011**

**7<sup>th</sup> August 2011**

Appointments for check and assessment drives can be arranged through the Associates Officer, Ian Phillips ([nam\\_secretary@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nam_secretary@yahoo.co.uk) or 07967 651820).

## 5 Minute Interview



**Steve has been a member of the Group for two years, and has been our Senior Observer since February. He is passionate about driving which is very apparent in the enthusiasm he brings to the Group.**

**We understand he has just celebrated his 7<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary (which maybe his last if Caroline reads this interview!)**

**Steve Smith  
Chief Observer**

### ***When did you pass your IAM Test?***

- ) I have not actually taken the IAM as I gained membership status as a Police Grade 1 advanced driver in West Midlands Police in 1992. I did take and pass my IAM Motorcycle test two years ago as it opened a door for police motorcycle training.

### ***What is your occupation?***

- ) I am a police driver trainer for Northamptonshire Police in both cars and motorcycles I have been doing this for 3½ years. Previously I was a police officer mostly working on the motorway with Warwickshire. I then took a career break in 2001 (because of elderly relatives) and during this time qualified as an ADI and set up my own driving school. Towards the end of the career break Caroline, my wife, saw an advert for the Northamptonshire Police role, which I went for and got. I am really lucky as I go to work to play! – Not many people are able to say that.

### ***What do you currently drive?***

- ) A Citroen C1 (its all the wife will allow!)

### ***What would be your dream car?***

- ) A McLaren F1, but the Audi R8 is rather nice as well.

### ***Where do you like to holiday?***

- ) North Wales – we love the mountains and the scenery (and my wife won't get on an airplane).

### ***Do you have any pets?***

- ) Only the wife! We used to have a dog who had to be put down at 18½ years old, and we said we could never go through that heartache again.

### ***When not observing, how do you relax?***

- ) Mountain biking – I often do 40 miles over a weekend, and enjoy biking through Salcey Forest. I also enjoy gardening, walking, DIY – especially doing up houses. We have done 7 in the last 11 years.

### ***What is your favourite film?***

- ) All the Terminator films

### ***If you won the lottery, what would you spend it on?***

- ) I would buy a dream house in the countryside – a nice detached bungalow in North Wales near the mountains and the sea, and with a block of garages for my dream cars. I would also buy some dream cars – an Audi R8, a Metro 6R4 and a Lancia Stratos rally car. I would also make sure my family and friends are okay for money and did not have to worry.

### ***What one tip would you pass on to an associate?***

- ) Don't be disheartened when things don't work properly the first time because they will. Go for small aims, do it bit by bit and development will follow.

# Driving in Adverse Conditions

**Simon Best, IAM's Chief Executive**

Published June 2010

This month I represented the IAM at a panel held at the Department for Transport (DfT) looking into Winter Resilience.

It was an independent inquiry and the first time I had done this - but I found it quite revealing.

The IAM punches above its weight when it comes to driving expertise and – while we weren't the only motoring organisation giving evidence to this inquiry - we were the smallest by far.

There was inevitably a focus on salt supplies and the state of the UK roads.

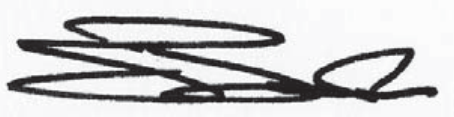
My take was that, while the distribution of salt supplies wasn't as good as it should have been, at least part of the problem centred on the lack of communications. As drivers, we didn't know really which roads were open and which weren't. So how were we meant to plan our journey?

In terms of driver education, there was predictably a lot of talk about skid pan training – but frankly, I felt this rather missed the point. During the really severe weather, yes, part of the issue was about drivers stopping effectively, in safety. They wanted to know what to do and how to prepare the vehicles. But the main priority was getting them going in the first place! Standard advice about “not travelling unless absolutely necessary” had proved particularly pointless as the days of snow extended. What constitutes “absolutely necessary”? I pointed out that the UK grinds to a halt at the first fall of snow and that is an unacceptable state.

That said, the IAM welcomed this independent review and I agreed that the vast majority of road users, householders and businesses would like to exercise their sense of personal responsibility when dealing with weather related issues.

The role of government, central and local, should be to allow us as drivers to make informed decisions and safely contribute to keeping the country moving. For example, during the many TV and radio interviews that Chief Examiner Peter Rodger did, one of the questions that came up was personal responsibility. Is it right to clear snow from the pathway in front of an individual's property? Or does this action somehow render the household liable if a pedestrian subsequently slips or falls?

The IAM believes that keeping traffic flowing is a key economic and safety function of road authorities and budget constraints should not have a part to play in winter maintenance decisions. IAM members are among the British drivers who already pay sufficient tax on their motoring to fund a winter maintenance operation geared up to the worst conditions.



Simon Best  
Chief Executive  
[ceo@iam.org.uk](mailto:ceo@iam.org.uk)

## Cuts must not halt drive to reduce road deaths, says IAM

Released: 24th June 2010

The reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads must not be compromised by anticipated cuts in government spending, said the IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) as the latest figures were released by the Department for Transport (DfT).

Neil Greig, the IAM's Policy and Research Director, said: "The IAM is pleased to see the continued downward trend in road deaths in the UK. As ever there is no single factor that you can point to. We would argue that the focus on rural roads in the last two years has undoubtedly helped with rural road safety campaigns by the DfT and the police raising awareness that drivers are most at risk in the countryside.

"Two other factors to consider are that fewer youngsters are taking the test due to demographic trends and we are all driving safer cars as the old pre airbag, non crash tested bangers go off the road."

Mr Greig said that the IAM's main concern is that road safety is an easy cut in the light of the public sector spending problems. "We must maintain budgets if this downward trend is to continue and we are to make Britain's roads the safest in the world," he said.

Today's DfT figures show overall casualties down. The number of people killed in road accidents fell by 12 per cent from 2,538 in 2008 to 2,222 in 2009. In accidents reported to the police 26,096 people were killed or seriously injured in 2009, six per cent fewer than in 2008. There were just over 222,000 road casualties in Great Britain in 2009, four per cent less than in 2008.

"If the results continue to improve like this, we will be well below 2,000 fatalities by 2020," said Mr Greig.

## Give drivers the skills to tackle Britain's most dangerous roads, says IAM

Released: 30 June 2010

The IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) today welcomed the publication of new crash risk tables for Britain's roads, part of the Road Safety Foundation annual survey.

Neil Greig, IAM Director of Policy and Research said: "Information on high-risk locations will help any driver stay safe on our most dangerous roads. Saving as many lives as possible within potentially limited budgets is going to become very important in the next few years, and the IAM supports using this information to target investment where it will bring most benefit.

"While the IAM supports continued investment in the roads with the highest risk, the long-term answer still lies in driver improvement. The first step should be to equip young drivers with experience of rural 'A' roads by including these in the driving test. Government support of a lifelong learning driver culture would make motorists better able to cope with dangerous roads."

Mr Greig added: "By being alert, processing the environmental information around you, recognising the hazards and taking safe driving seriously, anybody can handle even the most dangerous of Britain's roads."

*Issued by the IAM press office, 020 8996 9777*

## Every 7 Seconds ..... ?

Being an old fogey of the Group, I decided it was time I brushed up on the theory of advanced driving so I invited myself to one of the Associate classroom sessions run by Steve Smith and John Norrie (on the promise that I would behave myself and sit quietly at the back!).

So at 08:30 one Sunday morning (yes, 8.30 on a Sunday does exist!), I duly turned up, along with two others who were allegedly sitting at the back being quiet (Brian Johnson and Ray Blewitt) and with three Associates, John, Agnes and Gary. It must have been quite off-putting for the three Associates to be surrounded by so many other Group members!

The 'Class of June 2010'



L-R: Ray Blewitt, Brian Johnson, John Barrat, Agnes Lee, John Norrie, Gary Houghton and Steve Smith

Although the classroom session only took about 2 hours, Steve and John took us through a large number of topics, from the basics right through to limit points, driving plans and zones of relative safety. Steve's electronic presentation was excellent and included photographs of real scenarios which enabled us to visualise the techniques, and both Steve and John took to drawing such things as limit points and cornering to help our understanding.

Some of the things I picked up on were:-

**Gears to Go**  
**Brakes to Slow**

**Maximising tyre grip.** Steering, braking and using the gears all reduce tyre grip, and if you do all three together it reduces the grip even more! Use a maximum of 1 brake and 1 gear change per hazard.

**Body Language.** Your positioning on the road can tell other road users (drivers, pedestrians etc) what you are doing, for example when you are on a motorway, if a car starts moving towards the right of his lane, then he is likely to be thinking about overtaking.

**Use all your senses when driving.** Sight, hearing, smell and feeling all provide clues to what is happening around you, and you can then adjust your driving accordingly. For example, when driving through a village, if you wind your window down, you will be able to hear traffic approaching that you may not be able to see; smelling cut grass may indicate a grass-cutter around the corner etc. Each morning I have to turn right onto the village street a little bit blind due to a sharp bend on the left, and I now find that having my window down – with the radio off! – provides me early warning of approaching vehicles.

**Gear changing.** Thumbs up or thumbs down for a gear change, and take 2 seconds on the gear change enables a smoother one.

**Driving plans.** Dithering versus decision! Forming driving plans provides you with instant decisions rather than trying to decide what to do when faced with an unexpected hazard and wasting valuable time (which could be the difference between you avoiding a car and hitting it).

**Observation links.** Use observation links to help determine your correct position on the road, for example looking across the hedges/fields to see where the telegraph poles are will give an indication of which way the road goes; wheelie bins at the side of the road could indicate a dustbin lorry around the corner; again looking across hedges/fields, a vehicle coming in at a 90° angle may indicate either a very sharp bend or a road junction ahead.

**Zones of relative safety.** For every one foot less gap between you and the vehicle in-front, lose 10 mph to ensure you keep the zone of safety around you.

**Limit points.** Limit points are critical to enable you to judge the severity of the bend, which enables you to judge the best speed and position on which to enter into the bend. By watching the limit point, you can then see when the bend opens up, and when it is safe to increase power to drive out of the bend.

There were many other areas of driving discussed, and the above areas were covered in much more detail than I can fit in here.

Following the classroom session, Steve and John then took the three Associates on a demonstration drive to show the techniques discussed actually in practice.

... and the 7 seconds - this is the maximum time you should have between mirror checks !

Henny Cameron

**Associate Members – you are entitled to attend a classroom session as part of your training. Please contact Steve Smith to confirm dates (see Associates Spotlight).**

## Associates Spotlight

When you join the Northampton Advanced Motorist Group as an Associate Member (i.e. a driver that wishes to prepare for and take their test), your training will normally follow the format below.

1. You will have an initial assessment drive, normally at the monthly Sunday checkdrives (1st Sunday in the month, Midsummer Meadows car park, Northampton, 09:30-12:00). An assessment can be arranged outside of the Sunday if necessary.
2. Once you have joined the Group, your observer will invite you to a classroom session including a demonstration drive. Both of these are normally conducted by Steve Smith, a member of Northamptonshire Police's Driving School, who is also our Senior Observer. The classroom session is designed to cover the fundamentals of advanced driving and the demonstration drive will give you an opportunity to see advanced driving in practice. The sessions are held at Police HQ in Northampton (Wootton Hall), and will last approximately 3½ hours. This is completely free and has proved to be of great benefit to new Associates as they develop their new skills.
3. The classroom/demonstration session can be completed at anytime within your training but it is suggested that, where practicable, it is done sooner rather than later to receive maximum benefit to fit in with training module of: – Explain, Demonstrate, Imitate, Practice.
4. You will continue your preparation for the Advanced test, either attending the Sunday morning sessions or using the 1-2-1 scheme, whichever is preferable.
5. Once you are ready for your test, you will be taken on a mock test by one of the senior observers, after which you can apply for the Test.

*(Note: the above is also open to existing IAM Group members who would like to refresh their skills and/or see how training is now carried for new Associates)*

### Sunday Morning Check-drive and Assessment Sessions

These normally take place on the **first Sunday** of each month at **Midsummer Meadow Car Park**, Bedford Road, Northampton (Near Avon Cosmetics and Becketts Park). Note: alternative venue in exceptional circumstances is the Borough Council offices, Cliftonville. On checking in you will be allocated an observer who will then take you out on your observed drive. You will receive a series of these sessions, usually one each month, until your driving has reached the required standard in order for you to pass the IAM driving test

The sessions are **09:30** and **11:00** hours on these following dates: (2010) **5<sup>th</sup> September, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 7<sup>th</sup> November, 5<sup>th</sup> December**, (2011) **2<sup>nd</sup> January, 6<sup>th</sup> February, 6<sup>th</sup> March, 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 5<sup>th</sup> June, 3<sup>rd</sup> July and 7<sup>th</sup> August**. Appointments for check and assessment drives can be arranged through the Associates Officer, Ian Phillips ([nam\\_secretary@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nam_secretary@yahoo.co.uk) or 07967 651820).

### 1-2-1 Scheme

The Group also offers a one-to-one scheme, where an associate member is paired with an observer. Checkdrives can then take place at mutually convenient times, for example on a Friday evening or Saturday morning. This scheme provides consistency as your observer will take you for all your checkdrives until you reach test standard. It also offers the opportunity to consolidate your training into a shorter timespan. For further information please contact Peter Davey on 01604 753405 or [nn5pete@virginmedia.com](mailto:nn5pete@virginmedia.com).

# REGION 7 FORUM

Taken from the minutes of the Region 7 Forum (10<sup>th</sup> April 2010) attended on behalf of the Group by Peter Davey.

## **Observer/Senior Observer Training & the Regional Training Teams (RTT)**

In the late 90s, the role of Senior Observer was introduced. These were internally trained and tested by local Examiners, and standards varied nationwide. As a next step, the IAM had looked into how to improve standards, with the first trials (bikes) held in Region 1. The 'trainees' were actually examiners, but the message was not consistent, so the next stage, in 2000, was discussed. At this time, the 11 Staff Examiners started carrying out the Senior Observer test, meaning that fewer people were setting the overall standard. The emphasis from the Staff Examiners then moved to Senior Observers who had good coaching ability, so that they could teach Observers to Senior Observer standard. Trials have now been running for some 4 years and the results indicate an overall improvement in standards, with Senior Observers, Observers *and* Associates benefitting. Training days for Observers/Senior Observers are becoming increasingly popular, with the 2-day sessions (currently bikes only) increasingly so.

Regional Training Teams (RTT) are in an embryonic state, with Region 7 (our Region) currently having 2 teams of about 12 people in the south of the Region and 8 people in the north. All are in the Team on the recommendation of the respective Staff Examiner, and the whole idea is cross-pollination, with no domination from 1 or 2 Groups. So far the results are very promising and initially the idea of 3 year re-qualification for Senior Observers, by the RTT, is being discussed. Final decisions on how this will be underwritten have not been made, but it is envisaged that relevant costs would be met by Head Office.

## **Open Forum – Training**

It was noted that the first training day (in the north of the Region) was all Senior Observers or Senior Observer 'wannabees', whereas the second (in the south of the Region) was a mix of Senior Observers and Observers. That this was deliberate, and all future training days will be open to all observers, not simply Senior Observers.

The same format will be followed at each:- After briefing, the attendees will be split in two, with the first group (two Observers and one Trainer to each car) having road sessions to improve their observing skills. It must be measurable and topical, the idea being to get Observers to be more proactive and to teach. The second group, as a bit of a fillip, will go out with an Examiner. As the RTT is developed, the Trainers will more and more be totally RTT approved (ie, 'portable' assets that can be used anywhere in the Region) – it is important that the RTT is seen as a resource. A further benefit is the cross-pollination of ideas between Groups, and even Senior Observers can learn something from others.

Examiners already check on standards, through the quality of people presented for the test. Also, Staff Examiners get a good feel of the overall Group standard through the Senior Observer test and re-test. If any problems are noted, the Staff Examiner will seek a meeting with the Group to try and establish a remedy. Use of 'portable' assets, however, will never become compulsory (everyone in the Group is, after all, a volunteer), but attempts will be made to get all Groups to agree with the concept.

The Senior Observer tests are now standardised around the country, based on what has been done in Region 7. The importance is not so much the driving, as to how the teaching is put across. In the first part of the Senior Observer test the Staff Examiner will be in the back of the car and the potential Senior Observer in the front with his normal Associate. The Staff Examiner will be looking at all aspects of the potential Senior Observer's performance, particularly the initial briefing, which tends to be poor to average. The second part will be the potential Senior Observer driving, with the Staff Examiner in the left-hand seat. It is expected that the Staff Examiner will be briefed (as if he is an Associate) and the potential Senior Observer will carry out an appropriate commentary during the drive. There is no set timescale before an Observer can become a Senior Observer, ability and confidence being the main criteria. Groups should have around 1 in 5 or 6 of their Observers as a Senior Observer.

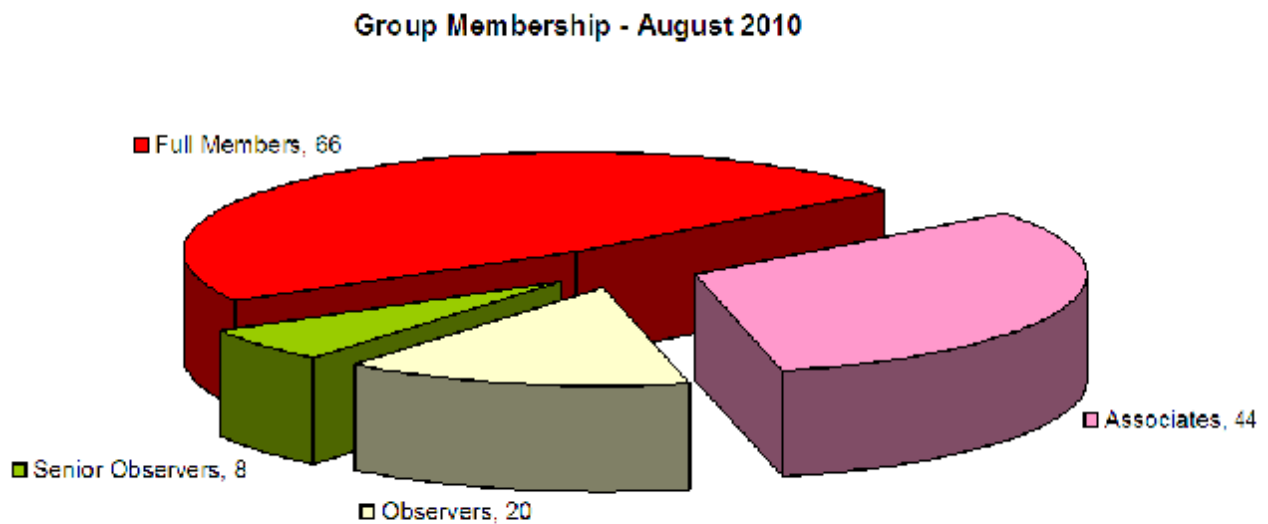
*[The Region 7 Forum is a separate body that all IAM Groups in our region can join. It provides a voice into IAM HQ, and an opportunity for the regional groups to share best practice.]*

## ABOUT YOUR GROUP

The Northamptonshire Group was founded in 1978, and as can be guessed from the name, covered the whole of the county.

During its 33 years existence the group has helped over 750 associates to pass the test. It has also helped form a number of Groups including the Milton Keynes Group (thriving with over 350 members), the Corby and District Group (in 1989) and the Northampton Advanced Motorcyclists (formed in 1987 now over 160 full members). Due to the formation of the other local Groups, we changed our name to the Northampton Group in the 1990's.

Our membership currently stands as follows:



The Group has been involved in many events over the past 33 years including marshalling at the Northamptonshire Better Driver Completion (ran during the late 1990s by the County Council and local emergency services), our own manoeuvring competitions and manoeuvring competitions on behalf of other events such as Brafield Stock Car racing. One of the events was the infamous Spud Run – a course set out in a square with a number of garages that the competitors had to either drive or reverse into and collect a potato from a bucket, according to the course layout. The whole run was timed and there were the obvious penalties for missing a potato and knocking the cones. To make it fair for the competitors the Group would gain sponsorship from a local car dealership to lend two vehicles (normally Fiesta size). In hindsight I am not sure how we dared do this, as the vehicles suffered tremendous abuse, often finishing a run with a smoking clutch!.

If you have any anecdotes of the Group please contact the newsletter editor.

## Drifting or Over Grip by Ian Phillips

Having completed the CAT driver training day at Millbrook some time ago and having a really enjoyable day I enquired with them as to what I could do next to improve my driving skills further. After some discussion I decided on their Over Grip course. Those in the know might describe it as "Drifting".

I then had to decide who else I could persuade to come with me as the course is designed around a few people. After a short period I'd lined up one of my closest friends, his wife and son and my wife Ann.

So five of us ventured down to Millbrook one sunny morning and met with Colin and Jo from CAT. After a few introductions and safety briefing we were ready to go. The format consisted of 1-2-1 tuition with Colin while the rest of the group were able to watch and learn from a safe distance.

So first off it was into the driving seat CATs Lotus Elise. I don't know how many of you have ever tried to squeeze into an Elise with a full roll cage but I can tell you it's not very easy (must go on that DIET). Colin explained that he wanted me to drive in a circle gradually getting faster and faster until you started to feel the front wheels losing grip and the car starting to understeer. Pretty much job done in the Lotus and on to the next person. Oh forgot to mention getting out of the car..... Well getting in was easy compared to getting out!! Are you supposed to end up with both hands on the tarmac and your bum in the air??



Image courtesy of CAT Driver training  
*(sorry, although we tried hard, we could not obtain a photo of Ian with his bum in the air!)*

Colin rapidly went through the rest of the group and everyone became familiar with understeer and what it feels like.

Then into the Caterham for the start of the drifting part of the course. Colin placed a cone in the middle of the tarmac area and explained that the object of the exercise is to pirouette the car round the cone keeping your front wheel as close to the cone as possible whilst losing grip with the rear wheels. When you get it right which only takes a couple of goes to get the hang of it, it feels great as the back of the car slides round in a perfect circle. Of course it

doesn't always go right and there was one point at which the barriers did loom a little close but nothing to worry about as Colin exudes confidence and always seems to have everything under control as he's sitting next to you all the time.

After watching the other members of the team which can be very entertaining it was then on to the next part of the course. Oh I should mention the cakes and coffee supplied by CAT are very nice indeed.

Colin then placed two cones about 20 m apart and the task we were set was to negotiate the cones driving the car in a figure of eight. The tricky bit was that you had to break traction of the rear wheels as you went round the cones and "Drift" the back of the car out. When you get it right it feels great as if you are in total control of the car as the back slides out and neatly round the cones. The trick of breaking traction is to lift off the throttle flick the steering wheel in the opposite direction and then accelerate hard. The rear wheels then break out and the car starts to slide. You then need to feather the throttle to maintain a smooth drift. Then do the opposite around the next cone in the other direction. I might have made it sound easier than it is as there were a number of times where I got it wrong and the car just spins. Still as they say "you learn from your mistakes".

Colin then takes you to the part of the circuit that has a large circle painted on it, probably 20m in diameter. The idea is then to drift the car around the circle keeping as close to it as you can. Well I think my best effort was to get around about three quarters of the circle with the back sliding round, couldn't manage any better than that. However the youngest member of our group, Jay, took to it like a duck to water and made all us "experienced drivers" a little envious of his natural skill.

All in all the day is a great fun and you learn how to control a car in the event of a back end slide. Colin & Jo from CAT are fun and professional at the same time and always do their utmost to make sure everyone gets the most out of the day. I can't recommend them highly enough and will be looking to get some more training from them in the future. Look up CAT driver training on the internet if you want to see what they do.

*For further information on the above contact:-*

**CAT Driver Training**

*50 Lincroft*

*Cranfield*

*Beds. MK43 0HT*

*Office Telephone & Facsimile: 01234 757633*

*Email: [info@catdrivertraining.co.uk](mailto:info@catdrivertraining.co.uk)*

## Tackling Dangerous Roads

The Road Safety Foundation has published its annual road tracking survey which covers 28,000 miles of British Roads. Top of this year's persistently higher risk roads is the A537 between Macclesfield and Buxton, known as the Cat and Fiddle. A 50mph single carriageway, running through the Peak District National park, the route has severe bends and steep falls from the carriageway, and is edged by dry-stone walls or rock face for most of its length. Fatal and serious collisions on this section have risen 127 per cent in the last three years.



(c) Dave Dragon

Topping the list of the UK's 10 most improved roads is the A40 Llandovery-Carmarthen. Junctions have been upgraded, new road markings introduced and extensive resurfacing – including anti-skid treatments – carried out, leading to a 74 per cent reduction in fatal and serious collisions.

'While the IAM supports continued investment in the roads with the highest risk, the long-term answer still lies in driver improvement.' says Neil Greig, IAM director of policy and research. 'By being alert, processing the environmental information around you, recognising the hazards and taking safe driving seriously, anybody can handle even the most dangerous of Britain's roads.'



The Cat & Fiddle pub after which the A537 is named

*Courtesy of the IAM Advanced Driving magazine, Summer 2010*

## Observer Focus

### Current Observers

<b>Chief Observer:</b>	<b>Steve Smith</b>	<b>Deputy Chief Observer:</b>	<b>Peter Davey</b>	
<b>Senior Observers:</b>	<b>Alan Brown</b> <b>John Hodges</b>	<b>Brian Johnson</b> <b>Derek Lobb</b>	<b>John Norrie</b> <b>Mike Saunders</b>	
<b>Observers:</b>	<b>John Church</b> <b>Rene Crevel</b> <b>Pam Durrant</b> <b>Roy Franklin</b> <b>Ian Hancox</b>	<b>John Josephs</b> <b>Alan Joynes</b> <b>Roger Loomes</b> <b>Sanjay Mehta</b> <b>Bill Nickson</b>	<b>Mark Osbourne</b> <b>Alan Picketts</b> <b>Gillian Simons</b> <b>David Smith</b> <b>Dusan Torbica</b>	<b>Peter Turner</b> <b>Graham Wallace</b> <b>Graham Ward</b>

If you are interested in becoming an observer, contact Steve Smith.

### Observer Meeting – Monday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2010 (19:30)

The next Observer meeting will be held at **Driving School, Wootton Hall Park**, on 8<sup>th</sup> November at 19:30. These meetings are aimed at keeping observers abreast of changes to the test, techniques etc and are a forum to discuss all things related to motoring/observing.

The following Observer Meeting has been arranged for 8<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

## Membership Issues

### Fees

#### New members 'Skill for Life' - £139

Includes:

- initial associate membership to the Northampton Advanced Motorists local IAM Group;
- a copy of the IAM publication "How to be an Advanced Driver"
- the Advanced Driving Test fee
- guidance from the Group observers to reach test standard
- First year's membership to the IAM (on passing the advanced test)
- First year's membership to a local Group, including all observed drives

#### Group Membership

Annual subscription renewable on 1<sup>st</sup> February each year by both Associate and Full members of the group (where Associates have joined via the *Skill for Life* package, this will become payable after one year's membership).

Individual - £10

Joint (two people living at same address) - £17

Enquiries and membership renewals should be addressed to the Membership Secretary, **Pam Durrant**. All cheques made payable to 'Northampton Advanced Motorists Group'.

## A Physicist writes .....

April 2010

Sometimes looking back can be rewarding. I've just been reading Heather Greves' article in the last Thames Valley Group newsletter, about her first car (a Morris 8). She ended by saying that her second one was a Morris Minor. Well, so was my first car, as I mentioned here once before, though all I said was that one day I applied the jack to the correct place below the centre door-pillar and started turning it: the jack rose up but the car didn't... For more than two years, though, she had transported me willingly enough. She cost £180 (lent to me by my father) in 1965, and came with a full tank. In due course, when the fuel level looked low, being an impoverished student I asked nervously at a garage (no self-service in those days) for one gallon. Afterwards, with a different sort of nerve, I enquired why the needle hadn't risen visibly.



Did (or does) any popular car have more attractive body-curves than the Morris Minor? Like Heather's Morris 8, my car also featured those little trafficator arms that swung out smartly to announce an intention to turn left or right. It's hard to imagine a less effective way of indicating — or is it simply that we rely too much nowadays on bright winking lights, instead of thinking properly about what other drivers are likely to be planning, and what their vehicles are actually doing or are lining up to do?

Trafficators were fitted to several different vehicles in those days, but I believe the shape of the arm was always the same, with its distinctive triangle at the end, holding the bulb. It's said that this shape was derived from the diamond-ended signal arm in use on the Royal Bavarian Railway at the end of the nineteenth century, with half of the diamond removed so as not to stick out when the trafficator was retracted. Thus it is that a little bit of history connects with us.



1948 Morris 8

There were several ways of starting the engine of the Morris Minor. I forget exactly what was provided on the dashboard, but under the bonnet was a button you could push. This was rather dangerous if you had left the car in gear. Then when the battery faded, as mine did in that cold winter of 1965/6, out came the starting handle (dangerous likewise). You fed it through a hole in the front bumper to connect with the crankshaft, and then turned it

as sharply as possible — while trying not to grip it firmly in case it jerked forward or back. What a feeling of achievement when at last the engine sprang into life!

One of the servicing jobs on the Morris was pumping a grease gun into the lubrication nipples on the steering joints and elsewhere. To refill the gun, you opened it up and pressed it into a tin of grease, which had a loose metal disc inside with a hole in it. The stuff then squeezed through the hole and into the gun. That same grease tin (very nearly empty today) is the only souvenir I have of my first car...

Now for a look back at this year's previous columns: in January [*newsletter no 87*] I reported my research into those strips of hatching with a solid border that are spreading along the left-hand side of ordinary roads. Please don't call me in evidence, but what I said was that driving over them is perfectly legal (according to the Department for Transport), as this combination of hatching and border isn't even shown as a 'prescribed marking' in the regulations, let alone included in the 'keep-off' list. The Highway Code doesn't cover it either. Encouragingly, a reader wrote in my support, pointing out that if the hatching was intended to be a no-go area, the prohibition would surely also apply to cyclists, which would be truly absurd.

Furthermore, I haven't seen any instruction that you should only cross solid-border hatching if it's safe to do so (which is certainly the rule if the border is a broken line, as stated in the regs and in the Highway Code).

In fact there *is* a diagram of hatching on the left bordered by a solid line in the regulations, but it's clearly pictured and labelled as marking the end of a hard-shoulder section on a motorway (though even here, surprisingly, it isn't specified as forbidden territory). But hang on a minute: I've just found a DfT report on the design of roundabouts, referring to this very diagram from the regs, and strongly suggesting that its hatching can be laid down at the side of any road, to indicate areas that "vehicles should not enter unless it is seen as safe to do so." Does this amount to official permission to local authorities to use an unofficial marking for an regulated purpose? Anyway, I hereby give up trying to make any sense of hatching!

In February I discussed the habit some people have of coasting in neutral. One of several reasons I offered for not doing this was that you might need to steer and brake suddenly at the same time, and at tick-over speed the engine vacuum might not be enough to power-assist both functions. Well, I'm still unsure on that question, but it does occur to me that if the engine happened to stall while you were coasting, you would definitely lose servo-assistance. Result: feeble brakes and laborious steering. And I've learnt that there's another situation too where you will lose control this way (because of lack of vacuum), namely a wide-open throttle and a racing engine...

...which brings me to last month's column and the run-away Toyotas (very rare things, let's not forget). I said that their accelerator pedals had been jammed either by floor-mats or by the friction attachments to the pedals — but apparently not all the incidents can be explained this way. Some were reportedly due simply to driver error: the accelerator was pressed in mistake for the brake pedal, maybe, and then in panic and confusion the driver tried to 'brake' even harder.

Another idea that is increasingly being mooted (though it's strongly denied by Toyota) is a temporary malfunction of the onboard computer, for whatever reason. The problem with this explanation, as I understand it, is that if the computer *has* misbehaved, there's unlikely to be any trace of the event to be found within it afterwards. And black boxes aren't going to be fitted any time soon to every car, as they are to every aircraft, to record all possible evidence just in case of an accident. Not much chance, then, that investigators will establish for certain whether or not this has been the cause of particular Toyota incidents.

Or, to balance what I said at the beginning, sometimes looking back can be unrewarding!

*Peter Soul*

## Quiz Page

### The Autumn Coffee Time Quiz

1. How many medals has Great Britain won at the Summer Olympics?
2. How many in an American Football team?
3. How many words in the Oxford Dictionary?
4. How many UK No 1s did the Beatles have?
5. How many states in the USA?
6. How many genes are in the Human Genome?
7. How many calories should we have per day (men/women)?
8. How many calories in a Big Mac?
9. How many times has Za Za Gabor been married?
10. How many arms does an octopus have?
11. How many people die from flu each year (worldwide)?
12. How many miles is the Tour de France?
13. How long is the Great Wall of China?
14. How long is a day on Mars?
15. How long is the River Nene?
16. How wide is a football goal?
17. How many people in the world (as of 8<sup>th</sup> August 2010)?
18. How many years did it take to build the Taj Mahal?
19. How long is the UK coastline (inc principle islands)?
20. Which country is the only one to have won a gold medal at every summer Olympics?

### The Summer Coffee Time Quiz answers

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. 10 Green Bottles hanging on the wall | 21. the 6 wives of Henry the eighth              |
| 2. 100 pennies in a pound               | 22. 64 squares on a chest board                  |
| 3. 6 murder weapons on a cleudo board   | 23. 76 trombones in the big parade               |
| 4. Goldilocks and the 3 bears           | 24. 60 seconds in a minute                       |
| 5. 366 days in a leap year              | 25. 8 pints in a gallon                          |
| 6. 3 Coins In a fountain                | 26. around the world in 80 days                  |
| 7. 101 Dalmatians                       | 27. a bird in the hand is worth 2 in the bush    |
| 8. 12 days of Christmas                 | 28. 1 for the road                               |
| 9. 4 horseman of the Apocalypse         | 29. 12 Good men and true                         |
| 10. 168 spots on a set of dominoes      | 30. 1 2 heads are better than 1                  |
| 11. 9 lives of a cat                    | 31. the seven deadly sins                        |
| 12. Snow White and the 7 Dwarfs         | 32. the famous 5                                 |
| 13. 21 Blackbirds in a pie              | 33. 12 months in a year                          |
| 14. 9 planets in a solar system         | 34. back to square 1                             |
| 15. 3 blind mice                        | 35. Face that launched a 1000 ships              |
| 16. 12 signs of the Zodiac              | 36. 3 STTW 3 sheets to the wind                  |
| 17. 1 horn on a unicorn                 | 37. 1 FITG 1 foot in the grave                   |
| 18. 88 keys on a piano                  | 38. Catch 22                                     |
| 19. 18 holes on a golf course           | 39. 32 Degrees Fahrenheit at which water freezes |
| 20. 7 brides for 7 brothers             | 40. 7 wonders of the world                       |

## A Grand Day Out

Henny cameron

It was a bright sunny morning when sixteen intrepid explorers boarded the shiny 1959 AEC Reliance Plaxton Panorama coach (reg 129DPT) – or to be more precise thirteen intrepid explorers boarded the coach, and then waited for the other three to arrive! As it is not good to name and shame your Chairman, I will not mention whose party was late!

I had an early preview of the 129DPT, as I had followed it almost the whole way to Northampton, our rendezvous point! It had been beautifully restored both inside and out, and turned out to give a surprisingly good ride, although when you are following it, it does not go very fast!



The early part of the journey was uneventful, although I was initially a little perturbed when we joined the M1, however 129DPT had a reasonable turn of speed and we reached our first stop (Leicester Forest East Services – a place I will not be recommending!) very quickly. Back on the road, we soon left the M1 (A610) and made our way through the towns and villages on route to Crich in Derbyshire. By this time the sun had disappeared behind a wealth of ominous looking clouds. It was fun watching the reactions of people who saw us – on the M1 it was all about getting in front of us at any cost – especially down the slip roads when we were travelling on the main carriageway. However, we brought smiles to the faces of the pedestrians and waves from the little kids on our rural route.

Once we turned off the main A610 we found ourselves facing a very steep windy road up to Crich, which the little 129DPT was tackling very well until a gear was missed (bear in mind there is no power assisted anything on a coach of this age), and we ground to a stop. I was amazed that once we started again, we had enough umph to get going and increase speed up this very steep road.

Once we got to our destination, the Crich Tramway Village, we parked up beside some modern coaches – and it was amazing how small and dinky 129DPT was against them!

Once Brian had organised our pennies (you are given a pre-decimalised penny to buy your rides on the trams!) and given us all instructions, we disembarked and went into the Tramway Village. As well as a multitude of different

trams (both type and age) running all day up and down the tram track, there are a number of static exhibitions. In the main exhibition hall is an exhibition of trams through the ages, starting with the horse drawn, then steam the whole way through to the electric trams you find running today. There are a number of tram depots, housing a rare assortment of restored trams, including German, American, British, single decker, double decker and sight-seeing ones. The workshop where restoration is undertaken has an upstairs viewing gallery to enable the restoration to be seen in action.

We spent approximately 4½ hours at the tramway Village, but it is over such a wide area and has so many different things to do and see, it was rare to see the other members of the group. Occasionally I would get a glimpse of two or three of them bravely sitting on the open top deck of one of the trams (it was cloudy and cold – especially for the idiot who had gone clad only in t-shirt/jeans (me!)).



At the appointed time we were all sitting on 129DPT waiting to go home – yes you have guessed it, except the same three that were late when we had set off that morning! I was looking forward to going down the long tortuous windy road we had traversed up earlier that day, but eventually realised we were taking a different route home! As with all journeys, it seemed a lot shorter on the way home (even though we did have to stop at the awful Leicester Forest East services again!), and sadly it was all too soon time to leave 129DPT. It had been a very enjoyable day, not only the tramway Museum itself, but the journey there and back.

Special mention needs to be made to Brian Johnson for organising this trip for us, and to Phillip Welsh and Martin Wills for driving the coach. Many thanks guys.



Two of the trams passing each other



inside the exhibition of trams through the ages



Part of the shed packed full of trams



Our dinky coach!



Brian being patient!



My own personal favourite

# Northampton Advanced Motorists

[www.iampton.org.uk](http://www.iampton.org.uk)

Affiliated to The Institute of Advanced Motorists

President : Davina Logan QPM – Deputy Chief Constable Northamptonshire Police

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## Highway Codes for Sale : £2-00

Got the new Highway Code yet? No? Well the Group is selling the new Highway Codes at just £2-00 (RRP £2-50). Available at the checkdrives.

## Videos, CDs and VDS available for Loan

The group holds a number of motoring titles available for loan, including

- 9 **Roadcraft:** Complements the police Roadcraft driving manual. Follows candidates on an advanced driving course at the Metropolitan Police driving school (Hendon). – *90 mins*
- 9 **Advanced Driving – What’s Involved** (IAM Video). Explanation of how advanced driving techniques involve concentration, observation, anticipation, planning and the system of car control – *10 mins*
- 9 **Safe Motorway driving.** Covers all aspects of motorway driving from planning, observation, breakdowns and personal safety to correct overtaking procedures and driving in adverse weather conditions. By following the advice given drivers will be better able to respond to incidents and conditions that may confront them on the motorway – *35 mins*
- 9 **Advanced Driving** – The system of car control. A video made by the Herefordshire Group of the IAM to assist in advanced driver training.
- 9 **Test Drive.** Some good examples of situations met while taking the advanced driving test together with some useful advice and demonstration by David Ovenden, ex-Deputy Chief Examiner – *30 mins*
- 9 **You can save lives too.** A practical guide to emergency first aid, and what can and should be done at the scene of an accident.
- 9 **You only live once** (IAM). Promotes the idea of raising driving standards to the IAM’s level without losing the enjoyment that motoring can still provide.
- 9 **Your licence to drive** (CDROM – computer software). An interactive test of driving knowledge and hazard awareness.

A returnable deposit of £10 is required. See Maggie Lloyd at the checkdrives.

## Miscellaneous Matters

### The Group

The Institute of Advanced Motorists was formed in 1956 and exists to encourage higher driving standards by offering an advanced driving test. This test can be taken in a car, motorcycle or in various commercial vehicles.

As well as being a charity, Northampton Advanced Motorists is affiliated to the Institute as a local IAM Group and offers guidance and advice to help candidates prepare for the IAM's advanced driving test – guidance which normal takes the form of observed drives in a candidates own vehicle.

The group is pleased to arrange assessment drives for those interested in having an impartial appraisal of their driving skills with a view to taking the advanced driving test. Assessment drives are available without charge or further obligation.

Information about the IAM advanced driving test and local group activities is obtainable from the Group Secretary, Ian Phillips.

### Newsletter

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the Northampton Advanced Motorists or The Institute of Advanced Motorists unless so stated.

### Data Protection

Members are advised that membership details are held on computer for the sole purpose of producing labels for distributing the group's newsletter and preparing the membership list. Any member not wishing to have individual details held in this way should advise the Group Secretary in writing.

### Newsletter Articles

Contributions are always welcome. The subject matter does not need to be motoring related, and can be humorous, serious etc.

The deadline for the next newsletter is **14th November 2010** (publish date 1st December 2010), but don't worry, any articles received after that date will be held over to the next newsletter.

## For Hire: Red Gazebo - £20 per day

The Group has a red gazebo for hire. Less than 12 months old, it was used briefly at Checkdrives while the Group was waiting delivery of the new MOC. It is in very good condition, and is available for a very reasonable £20 per day. Further details, contact Ian Phillips.