

Northampton Advanced Motorists

Newsletter

Issue 89

Winter 2010

From the Chair

John Hodges
Group Chairman



There has been quite a bit happening over the last few months within NAM. I'm sure you'll be interested to read all about it in our Winter newsletter!

Firstly, I am aware of about half a dozen recent IAM test passes. Their details appear herein. Well done one and all for your excellent achievement. I'm also very pleased to inform you that **Graham Ward** passed his Senior Observer test a little while ago and **Mike Habieb** has now qualified as a local group observer. NAM also has a new Honorary President following Davina Logan's retirement. This is **Nigel Rickaby**, head of Roads Policing, Northamptonshire Police. Welcome Nigel and thank you for volunteering your time and expertise. What an excellent team we have here at Northampton

Advanced Motorists!

While I'm on the subject of group things, we have now arranged our 2011 NAM Annual General Meeting to be a little later in the year than usual. This is because we've found that, particularly in the last couple of years, the weather in mid February has been so bad. We've now decided to have the 2011 AGM on **Wednesday 13th April 2011** as per usual at the Northampton & County Club. As a consequence all AGM notices will appear in the next NAM newsletter. However the opportunity to renew your NAM subscription for another year does appear in this edition! Probable date for the 2011 Annual Dinner likely to be Saturday 7th May, also at the Northampton & County Club. We will also be running a NAM promotional event (just talking with passers-by) from our MOC parked in Abington Street in Northampton on Saturday 11th December. Contact **Alan Brown** if you'd like to assist us there that day. All welcome!!

Since the last newsletter the group has enjoyed some important events. Another splendid day at Millbrook thanks to CAT Driver Training at the end of October. The weather was **superb** as we experienced a special session on the steering pad – firstly with ESP **on** then with ESP **off!!** What a fun day we had on the high-speed bowl and the tricky handling circuit – designed to test the capabilities of both driver and car! Phew!! Also our *Better Motorway Driving Day* at Police HQ was a success although we were disappointed with the numbers who responded to our pre-publicity, which included the NAM Chairman broadcasting live on BBC Radio Northampton! We are especially grateful to Nigel Rickaby and the police driver training team for making resources, including several police vehicles available for instructional use

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during the day. Thanks to all who volunteered their time. I hope everyone got a sandwich and at least several cups of tea. We've had seven people so far, sign up for further SfL training following the day. Also several more in the pipeline, I understand.

Please have a good look at our up-dated and much improved NAM web-site! The group's address is www.iamnpton.org.uk. Many thanks especially to **Chris Taylor** of BrightFox, who kindly gave of his expertise to assist us. Also our own **Colin Tarry**. Not only has the content and structure been greatly improved, but also the ease with which it can now be found by those browsing the Internet looking for us and/or what we do. (*Check it out now!*)

We had a regular Observers' Meeting at Police HQ on November 8th. Our guest speaker was our regional staff examiner (in charge of about 75 local IAM examiners) **Trevor Dickenson**. Trevor's comments were both relevant and interesting to our local training team. He praised the way we are now doing things in Northampton under **Steve Smith** and **Peter Davey**. To continue to improve the quality and readiness of our test-ready associates, can I ask all observers to note that a final pre-test check-drive should be carried out by one of the NAM Senior Observers prior to the actual test. We are sometimes still experiencing delay once an associate has put in for his test and his actual test date coming through from Chiswick. It's too easy for the candidate to go "off the boil" in the meantime. A final "polishing" run with a Senior Observer before test should give them their best chance of passing first time.

In these uncertain days of reduced funding for road safety, it seems more likely that groups like ourselves will increasingly work alongside the road safety "professionals" to continue the good work of the last 20 years, or so. In 1990 about 340,000 people were injured on the country's roads. Of these about 60,000 were seriously injured and over 5,000 died. In 2009 those national figures had decreased to about 220,000, 25,000 and 2,250 respectively. NAM has contributed to improving local road safety by training over 800 drivers and riders to an advanced level of competence. Further local events working together with the police

and other road safety partners are planned for 2011. Some major changes and challenges for the NAM group are envisaged during 2011. Make sure you attend our 2011 AGM for more information.

Good time **now** to check your car over for winter motoring, especially tyres. Thanks for your support during 2010. Stay safe out there. See you in 2011!!

John Hodges
Chairman, Northampton Advanced Motorists

Test Passes

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

- Darren Balderson**
- Aubrey Davis**
- Angie Doige**
- Matt Floyd**
- Gael Mace**
- Jayne Rush**
- Matthew Smith**
- Robin Webb**

Merry Christmas



Important Diary Dates

Publicity Day – Saturday 11th December 2010 **Abington Street, Northampton**

The Group will be running a publicity event in Abington Street on Saturday 11th December, 09:00-16:00 hours. We need as many volunteers as possible to man the mobile command unit that will be positioned in Abington Street and a spread the IAM word. Let Alan Brown know if you can help.

Annual General Meeting – 13th April 2011 **Northampton and County Club, George Row, Northampton**

The Annual General meeting will be held on Wednesday 13th April 2011, at the County Club, Angel Street, Northampton. Due to the atrocious weather we have had for the past two AGMs, we have moved the date to April in the hope of having less snow and ice on the roads!

The AGMs are always good evenings, and 2011 is no exception. As well as having an entertaining guest speaker lined up, this is an opportunity to question the Group in open Forum, and, for the brave, to join the committee!

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

Annual Dinner – 7th May 2011 **Northampton and County Club, George Row, Northampton**

Following the success of last year, this year's Northampton Advanced Motorists' Annual Dinner is being held at the Northampton and County Club, George Row, Northampton on Saturday 7th May (7.30 pm for 8 pm). The cost for the three course meal plus coffee and mints will be approximately £20 per head. Below are just a few of the comments following previous events:

-) "the beef melted in my mouth"
-) "it was excellent value for money"
-) "the service was spot-on"
-) "the venue was excellent"

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.

5th December 2010	6th March 2011	5th June 2011	4th September 2011
2nd January 2011	3rd April 2011	3rd July 2011	2nd October 2011
6th February 2011	1st May 2011	7th August 2011	6th November 2011

Appointments for check and assessment drives can be arranged through the Associates Officer, Ian Phillips (nam_secretary@yahoo.co.uk or 07967 651820).

5 Minute Interview



Roger is a welcome addition to the Group's Observing Team, having become an observer earlier in the year.

Roger Loomes
Observer

When did you pass your IAM Test?

-) 1989.

What is your occupation?

-) I am a technical trainer for graphics, working for Robert Horne. I teach people how to use the software and printing equipment to create vehicle graphics.

What do you currently drive?

-) I have a company car which is a Passat Diesel Automatic, while my own and hobby vehicle is a Landrover Freelander 2. I used to have a black Ford Capri and remember the first time I pulled into my work car park I turned the steering wheel and nothing happened, it had such a long front!

What would be your dream car?

-) A classic Aston Martin would be a nice car to own so to would an originally restored 1950's Corvette and to feed the passion of Landrovers I quite like the look of the new Range Rover Evoque.

Where do you like to holiday?

-) I love Cornwall. I love it out of season when it is not full of holiday makers. I like the ruggedness of Cornwall. My favourite city is San Francisco.

Do you have any pets?

-) A British Blue cat, official name Acresway Aviator, but we call him Avi. I used to hold a private pilot licences, and the breeder knew this so named him Aviator.

When not observing, how do you relax?

-) I don't fly at the moment because of the money. If I got rid of the Freelander I could then fly! I am the chairman of the national UK Freelander Club (www.freelanderclub.org). I enjoy clay pigeon shooting, amateur radio and photography. I have a Cannon 5D, and my preference is landscapes and macro photography (in 2009 I came 3rd in the Great Dorset Steam Rally photographic competition). I am also trying to learn the guitar

What is your favourite film/book?

-) James Bond or action films, I love the gadgetry in these types of films. I enjoyed the Dan Brown set of books.

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

-) I would pay off all the family's mortgages, and ensure my three daughters were set up for life. I would probably rekindle my flying and try helicopters. I love steam engines so would probably buy one to restore.

I would also go travelling – I would love to do an overland trip such as a long safari in my landrover.

What one tip would you pass on to an associate?

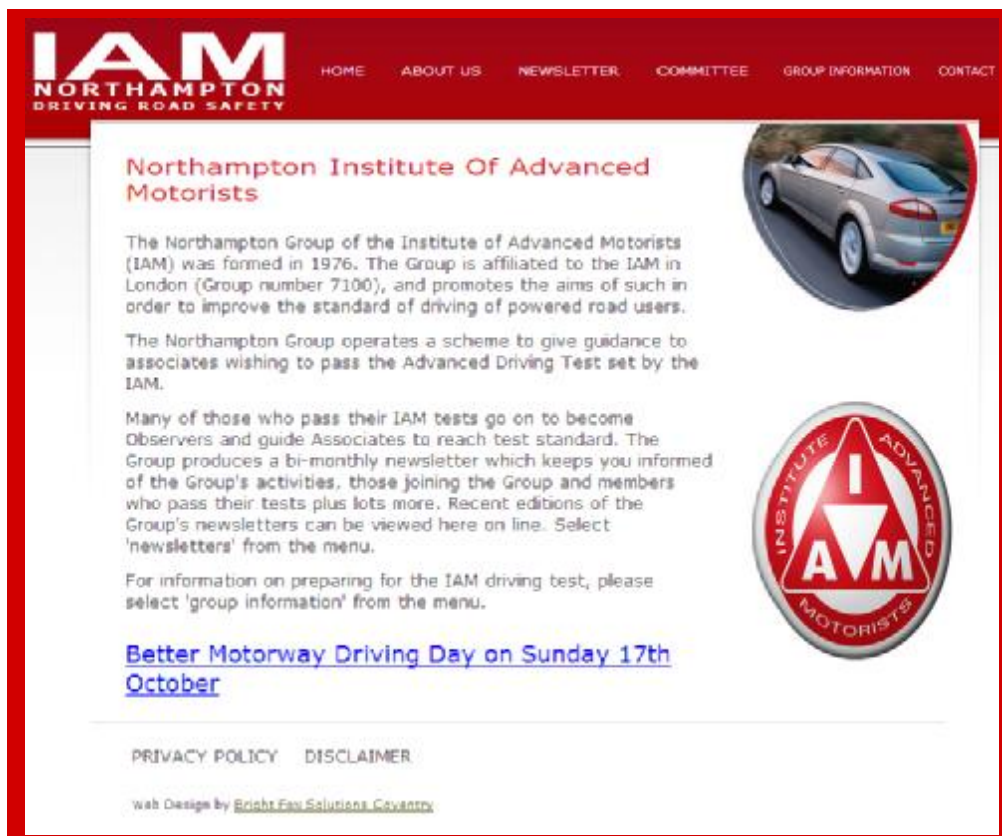
-) Don't rush things. A lot of people try to rush into a situation. Give yourself time, analyse the situation first.



Northampton Group Website

The group is very proud to launch its new web-site. Whilst the Group had a web presence for some years, we had outgrown our old site, and were very fortunate to be able to join forces with a web-site company called Bright Fox Solutions. Our new site is inline with the national IAM branding, is clean and easy to use, and will provide a real platform for us to recruit new members.

Bright Fox Solutions, a Coventry based web design company, were giving away a free website to 5 local non-profit organisations to help relay information and raise awareness of their cause. They encouraged local charities to come forward to take advantage of this offer, and although we are not particularly local to Coventry we got in contact as Chris Taylor of Bright Fox is the future son-in-law of our very own Steve Smith!



Thank you Bright Fox Solutions, especially Chris Taylor.

Bright Fox Solutions can be contacted on <http://www.brightfoxsolutions.com> - info@brightfoxsolutions.com - 02476318414

IAM supports plans to scrap M4 bus lane

Neil Greig

Published October 2010

Neil Greig, IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) Director of Policy and Research said: "The IAM has today welcomed the trial suspension of the infamous M4 bus lane. With road capacity at a premium an 'empty' lane on such a busy motorway was always going to be deeply unpopular.

"The key failing of the M4 bus lane was always that there were no obvious links to the bus services available. Drivers did not know where to park-and-ride so just had to sit in the queues.

"However, no bus lanes should be removed without a full review of their congestion busting potential or the overall safety of drivers on the route. The M4 bus lane has worked well from a safety perspective so its replacement must be closely monitored in the months ahead."

Regular review is essential - if more people are held up in the queues than benefit from faster bus journeys, bus lanes should be considered for removal or more properly integrated alternatives provided. Bus - based park-and-ride schemes linked to a network of bus lanes can work if they are easy to access and deliver a real benefit in time and cost savings.

Autumn driving: don't 'leaf' anything to chance

Published October 2010

The IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) has called for drivers to take extra care in the riskier driving conditions of autumn.

IAM Chief Examiner Peter Rodger said: "Autumn may be a beautiful time for a drive out to the country, but it carries its own risks.

"Hitting a patch of wet leaves can be as dangerous as running into standing water, when lower grip can reduce braking and steering. Piles of leaves could be obscuring a pot hole, and with road surface conditions in a poor state after last winter, this is a distinct possibility."

The change in the seasons can also take its toll on your car. Mr Rodger offers some simple tips on maintaining your car during this period:

- Clear out plenum chambers - the tray-like area under the bonnet, below the windscreen - as they can fill up with water when they get blocked with leaves. This water can seep into the car's electrics, causing expensive and potentially dangerous damage
- In cold weather, clear windscreens of condensation or ice before setting off. Always give yourself extra time, to ensure visibility is at an optimum before starting your journey
- Make sure your wiper blades are in good condition. If they squeak as they wipe, they probably need replacing, and always make sure they are turned off before starting the ignition to save the blades and the risk of a blown motor fuse when the first frost hits
- Autumn can also take its toll on car batteries, but some basic maintenance can help to prolong their life. Keep the top of the battery clean and dry and make sure the terminals are tight and free from corrosion. And ensure that the battery itself is mounted securely in its tray. If a battery is more than three-years old, check it now; you might save yourself many a frustrating start to a morning

Mr Rodger continued: "This is also a time of greater activity in the animal world; it's mating season for deer, and smaller animals will be on the hunt to gather food for the winter hibernation period. If you live in an area where wildlife roam, take extra care, and remember that deer tend to move in groups; if one runs out look for others doing the same and reduce your speed in readiness."

Get a grip

October 2010

The IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) urges drivers to ensure their tyres are in good condition, rather than wait until surface water, frost or snow turns the road under their wheels into a skid pan.

As tyres have only the area of the sole of a shoe in touch with the road at any one time, it's a safety 'no-brainer' to keep them in top condition, and extra care is needed at this time of the year when sudden heavy showers can profoundly affect tyre performance. More roads will also be worn out due to cut-backs on resurfacing, and this combination with worn out tyres is potentially lethal.

Peter Rodger, IAM Chief Examiner, said: "Under-inflation causes excessive tyre-wear, with every ten per cent under the recommended optimum decreasing tyre life by ten percent.

"Vehicles of drivers found to be at fault in high-speed accidents were found to be six times more likely to have worn tyres than those of the other drivers involved*. Keeping your tyres maintained is an important part of car-care, not only for safety but also for fuel-economy; under-inflated tyres will increase fuel consumption."

Mr Rodger gives some simple tips on checking the condition of your tyres:

- Check the general state of the tyre for cuts and bumps on the tyre wall and uneven wear
- Check that your tyres are correctly inflated (ideally when they're cold) – you can find the recommended pressure listed in the car's handbook, or on the manufacturers plate, fitted in many cars
- The legal minimum for tyre tread in the UK is 1.6mm, but for optimum safety you are advised to start looking for replacements if the depth is below 3mm. Tyres with less than 1mm of tread depth have one third the braking friction of one at the bare legal min of 1.6mm, and below 3mm the tyres skid resistance begins to decline rapidly

Just because tyres are legal, they still may not be at an optimum for braking safely in all conditions. When there is a 2mm film of water on the road, even 2mm of tread may give no better stopping friction than a bald tyre*. Have a quick look over your car once a week to notice any changes, and get your tyres checked by an expert if you are unsure.

Prepare your car for cold snap

The IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) is offering drivers in Scotland tips on preparing their cars for winter, as Arctic winds and snowfall are forecast over the next few days.

It is predicted that unseasonably cold temperatures will be accompanied by wintry showers on the east coast and in Scotland with hail, sleet and even snow on higher ground.

Peter Rodger, IAM Chief Examiner said: "Now is the time to give your car a health-check before winter conditions take their toll. Bad weather can strike quickly, and more severely than you expect, so it's really important to get your car ready to face the elements before they deteriorate."

Mr Rodger suggests some easy tips to prepare your car for winter:

1. In a British winter you are more likely to encounter wind and rain so make sure your windscreen wipers are in good condition and you clean the inside of the windscreen regularly
2. Do a proper winter check of your vehicle particularly the tyres, top up your washer fluid and make sure your old ice scraper and cans of de-icer are up to the job
3. The legal minimum for tyre tread in the UK is 1.6mm, but for optimum safety start looking for replacements if the depth is below 3mm. Tyres with less than 1mm of tread depth have one third the braking friction of one at the bare legal min of 1.6mm, and below 3mm the tyres skid resistance begins to decline rapidly
4. Check all lights. While someone observes the lights around the car, switch on each light one-by-one: headlights, sidelights, fog lights, indicators, brake lights, reversing lights, hazard warning lights and number plate lights. If alone, park by a reflective surface such as a garage door, illuminate all lights in sequence and look for the reflections
5. Pack an emergency kit in the boot. The IAM recommends a warm coat and a high visibility jacket, some food and water, a good pair of boots, de-icer and scraper, a torch, a spade and a mobile phone with a well-charged battery. It's also a good idea to programme your breakdown provider's emergency number, and your own customer reference number into your phone

Mr Rodger continued: "A survey has found that ten out of 11 rural councils still have not managed to complete all the necessary road repairs after last winter's severe weather, and it is likely that budget cuts will make things worse. If this problem is reflected across the country, having a well-maintained car, with particular attention to your tyres, is going to be of massive importance."



An Evening with Trevor Dickenson IAM Staff Examiner, Region 7

On 8th November Trevor Dickinson, our IAM region Staff Examiner joined us for an Observer evening. Trevor is in charge of over 70 IAM examiners covering a region stretching from the Humber Estuary, down to Oxford, and across the to east coast. There are many Groups within this region including Scunthorpe, Nottingham, Northampton, Grimsby, Oxford and Yarmouth.

During this evening he explained what he expects his examiners to look for during the Advanced Test.



Trevor Dickenson

A safe drive

The candidate should not 'try' to be safe, they need to drive normally and be themselves, otherwise it will all go wrong during the drive.

Trevor used a number of situations and anecdotes to demonstrate this. For example if the candidate comes up to a roundabout, and there is a gap they would normally take, do so. The candidate should not change your driving habits because they have the examiner beside them, but they should drive to how they have been guided on their observed runs. Trevor told us about a candidate who slowed down for every junction, including farm tracks, and peered in before speeding up again. Eventually the examiner asked why, and the candidate, very happy the examiner had noticed, said "My observer told me to show you I had seen the junction"

Got to be legal

For example, if the sign says Stop, you must stop. Candidates must know the when they can cross double white lines, for example if the candidate comes up to a badly parked car that is blocking the carriageway (with double white lines), the examiner does not want to spend the next half hour sitting behind the parked car!

Systematic

This is absolutely vital and The System is described in both the Police Roadcraft manual and the IAM How to be an Advanced Driver book (Information Position Speed Gear Acceleration). The candidate must comply with it and not some variation of it.

Smooth

Candidates have failed the test if they have been too rough with the brake and accelerator.

Progressive

Candidates must make progress and if safe and reasonable, the examiner will expect them to achieve the speed limit with reasonable haste. However, candidates need to bear in mind that in the middle of town, 30mph may be too fast. There is no excuse of 'my car will not do 70 mph'.

Good cornering technique

The examiner will expect the candidate to apply the correct approach, and use the limit point to drive through the bend using the correct gear.

Overall, the examiner is looking for a "thinking driver".



Some familiar faces at the Observers Meeting, rapt in attention at Trevor's talk

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 Chief 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) **5th September, 3rd October, 7th November, 5th December**, (2011) **2nd January, 6th February, 6th March, 3rd April, 1st May, 5th June, 3rd July and 7th August**. Appointments for check and assessment drives can be arranged through the Associates Officer, Ian Phillips (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.

National IAM Car Conference

Held again at Warwick University (located in Coventry!), the IAM Group conference was well attended, with over 200 delegates, that included John Norrie and myself.

At last years conference a number of challenges faced by the IAM were outlined, and Simon Best (IAM CEO) opened the conference by describing the progress made. The IAM has now stabilised its finances and undertaken a comprehensive restructure of the head office. Two other objectives achieved from last year are a new IAM website and the new Cycling Test.

The main challenge for this year is attracting and keeping IAM members. Currently the Skills for Life (SfL) sales are flat, at around 7,500 – 8,000 per annum. Back in 2006 the ratio of Associates to Observer was 2.6, now it is just 0.9 (a trend that has been seen in the Northampton Group as well).

Key initiatives the IAM are now working on include:-

- Young driver product
- New products that provide more ways for members of the public to gain access to the IAM
- Organisation of more Skills Days
- National Observer Standards

Group Evolution

There are currently 220 IAM Groups (94 bike groups). Up until now, the Groups have evolved through local initiatives, with no direction from IAM HQ as to where they should be located etc. (The local IAM Groups, such as Northampton) are not part of the IAM, although they are affiliated. They generally started either by a few keen individuals getting together (Northampton Group), or by an existing Group dividing (e.g. Corby & District was formed by the Northampton Group). IAM HQ are now designing what the IAM Group movement will look like in 5 years time, and to this end the delegates at the conference were presented with a series of questions we had to respond to using an electric voting gizmo.

Apparently only 23% of IAM full members are associated with an IAM Group (some of you may recall the Northampton Group sent a letter last year to all IAM Full members that lived within our catchment area that were not linked with a group, an exercise which enabled us to pick up a number of new full members).

Prince Michael of Kent Road safety award.

This prestigious award has been awarded to the IAM for it research and presented to the IAM during the conference. Among the papers cited were Rural Roads, Britain Dangerous Roads, Young Drivers, Older drivers safe/unsafe, and the many Fact sheets produced. These have helped road safety decision and policy making across the country.

Advertising and Marketing

HQ have been concentrating on consolidating all the advertising and marketing material with a new and consistent look and feel. This includes posters, adverts, and the Skill for Life leaflet.

IAM are trying to create national awareness and have during the past 12 months advertised in the following:

- What Car
- Auto Express
- Top Gear
- Sunday Times
- Telegraph on Saturday (Motoring Supplement)
- Silverstone F1 GP programme
- England Rugby Year Book (this did raise some questions!)
- National Trust Magazine (generated the biggest response)

There is a new marketing toolkit available on-line to groups (we have used it in the creation of our new web-site – see elsewhere in the newsletter for details.)

IAM Momentum (aka Drivecheck25)

A new product, aimed at the under 25's hence the original name of Drivecheck25. It comprises an on-line driver assessment that takes about 30 minutes, which will then be followed by an hour's on-road assessment by an IAM Examiner. The cost is £40, which if the individual goes on to purchase SfL (Skill for Life) is then deducted from this.

The IAM feel there are clear opportunities for this to sit alongside PassPlus, and are introducing it in time for Christmas.

Observing

The new project for the IAM, they are starting with a blank piece of paper entitled 'what is an observer', and 'how do we train observers'. The IAM admit the national observer training scheme launched in 2006 has been unpopular with groups, and hope to have a paper ready by Spring 2011.

The aim is to produce an Observer Toolkit for Groups to use.

Group Achievement awards

There were a large number of Groups Highly Commended for their achievements during the past year, and the following winners:

- 1st Chorley (won £1000)
- 2nd North Wales (won £600)
- 3rd Guildford (won £400)

Newsletter Award - Bristol

(Your Northampton Group newsletter was nominated for this award, which is a real pat on the back for all our contributors – so keep the articles coming. Well done and thank you).

Henny Cameron

SDS, The B645 and a 1.8T engine!

Nathan Doyle

I never thought that I would find myself uttering these words, but here goes: *My Skoda Octavia 4x4 1.8T is everything my MKIV Golf GTI wasn't and I love it!*

No one cares about the Octavia or wants to play boy racers, I can park without worrying about getting my Street cred OEM VW Valances at £250 a pop pinched from outside *Halfords* in under five minutes in broad daylight, or constantly tearing my hair out about scratches or kerbing my lovely *BBS Anniversary RCS* or tyre fitters damaging them.

Sounds like a sweeping statement, but one thing you will not find in my story are any of the usual *SDS* (Skoda Denial Syndromes) associated with the badge, comments like: "Its just the badge" or "They used to be rubbish but now they are *practically* a Volkswagen" are not why I opted for a Skoda, its been absolutely no trouble (touch wood).

Typical Volkswagen MKIV Golf problems:

Windows dropping, interior door handle cable snapping, numerous locking failures, electrical faults, heated seating faults, poor battery fob life, Milltek exhaust movement, the list goes on.

Here is a list of my former Volkswagens:

- 1) Mk3 1.4 CL
- 2) Mk3 1.6 GL
- 3) Mk3 VR6 2.8 Hi-Line (full spec)
- 4) Mk4 GTI 1.8T
- 5) Mk4 GTI 1.8T
- 6) Mk4 BORA 1.9 TDI
- 7) Mk4 GTI 1.8T (Modified) Brembo GT, Audi TT Lump, KO4 Turbo and custom remap approx 280 BHP.

It makes me shudder recalling when I got a job over in Cambridgeshire using the lovely B645, the Golf absolutely hated it and had to go, either that or my back! (Just look at the minuscule amount of clearance under the wheel arches and next time you use the B645 think of me!)

So what did I lose and what did I gain?

Well in terms of actual power, very little in my opinion. The Golf was a 1.8T 150 BHP engine, five speed and the Skoda, a 1.8T 4x4 180 BHP engine. So in terms of actual power, the Skoda feels like the turbo is lagging a bit, but its still responsive.

Handling, obviously being an estate and quite high up I find a bit of rocking and movement when cornering but I am pretty sure I could tighten things up a bit with some ARB or new bushes? I miss the shortshift that I had fitted on the Golf and I may get one fitted on the Skoda as I think the Audi TT ones fit, I think its one of those things, once you've got used to it (any opinions on this?)

The looks, well they are Chalk and Cheese but after all of the unwanted attention, I absolutely love that the Skoda

Octavia gives me the push of the Golf but without the 'baseball cap and trainers' appeal or 'cred'.



*Recent update, will be putting winter tyres on soon and have just fitted my first set of Philips X-treme power H4 bulbs and what a joy that was too! For any Golf owner that has ever needed to change a bulb (I did when a stone flew up and entirely smashed my headlamp) you will know of a whole new world of pain and labour that it involves (basically the entire front end of the car has to be removed, yes, the bumper, under the wheel arch torx bolts, front grille and the annoying little 'T' shaped bonnet pull which is going to be hell to put back on. Unlike the Skoda, where the lights slide in and out in under a few minutes...Ahhhh.

Am definitely enjoying my Octavia and the simplicity and ease it brings along with power when I need it and 4x4 muscle- roll on Winter!!



Audi TT engine, manifold and covers tucked neatly into Golf engine bay

Our New Market Traders!

Peter Davey

On Saturday the sixteenth of October we had a stand on Northampton Town Centre market as a trial. It was a cold morning, particularly in the shadows, in spite of the sunshine. This was unfortunate as the stand we were allocated did not face the sun!

Everything was up and running by nine o'clock with Maggie Lloyd, Steve Smith and myself in attendance, shortly backed up by John Norrie.

It was not the busiest of mornings as very few members of the public stopped, or even passed by.

Steve had a look into Abington Street to see how busy things were there and came back with the news that the shopping area was very quiet, I was able to confirm this later when I strolled down into the shops myself for a cup of coffee in one of the bakery shops. I found hardly any shoppers about and I was the only one having a snack in the refreshment area of the bakers shop.

Later we were joined by Brian Johnson but by this time, as we had no one else booked in to carry on with the stand in the afternoon, we decided to pack everything away and carry it to my car in the car park (We were not allowed to bring a vehicle back on to the market for loading until late afternoon).



John Norrie, Steve Smith and Maggie Lloyd

Considering the cost of having a stand on the market we felt it may be worth trying again, perhaps next year when the weather is warmer or setting up the group caravan in Abington Street.



Maggie with a passer-by

Peter and Maggie



All photos: Peter Davey

Observer Focus

Current Observers

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

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

Observer Meeting – Monday 7th March 2011 (19:30)

The next Observer meeting will be held at **Driving School, Wootton Hall Park**, on 8th 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 4th July 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 1st 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'.

The Stig in Black aka The Original Stig aka Perry McCarthy

Henny Cameron

This year unbeknown to us, the IAM had lined up a guest speaker at the Car Group Conference, and what an excellent speaker he was.

In his own words, when he learnt to drive he found that he could handle his car better than his friends, and was often to be found taking them out and showing them how to slide around roundabouts etc. Having spend a couple of years earning money on North Sea oil rigs, he entered the world of motor racing driving Formula Fords. He rapidly progressed though Formula 3 (Formula Ford with 'slicks and wings'), International Formula 3000 into Formula 1. During the 1992 season he drove for the ill-fated Andrea Moda team, and was in the same group of young up-coming F1 drivers as Mark Blundle, Johnny Hebert, Damon Hill and David Coulthard. Following some testing for both Williams and Benetton, Perry moved into the sports car arena taking part in such events as Le Mans.



As well as giving us some insights into the world of F1 Perry also told us of some of his exploits as the original Stig.

When filming 'Star in a reasonably Priced car' Jamie Oliver turned up in a camper van which Perry took around the track whilst Jamie was trying to make a salad in the back – not a problem as camper vans are not renown for their speed, except this one has a Porsche engine in! Perry also used to drive the celebrities own cars around the track (with the celebrity as a passenger). He took Jamie Oliver's Maserati GT round the track, throwing it round the corners and generally having a fun time. On one corner towards the end of the track he misjudged it and ended up coming off the track, burying the right wheel (alloy) into a pile of stones, then hitting a slight bump and coming down with a thud. Another time he was driving another celebrity's Maserati GT around, and coming to the same corner he made the same mistake, this time he remembered the stones and dove straight over the stones but went even further into the outfield going over even bigger bumps. When he stopped he turned to the celebrity and said he was really sorry – only for the celebrity to say 'that's okay, my Maserati is still in Monaco, this is just a loan car!'

Perry then opened up to questions from the floor, and they ranged from what his favourite car was through to his views on current driving standards. Here are just some of the questions and his comments:-

What is the best car you have driven?

Pagani Zonda – if you need to get home quickly

Honda Civic R is also pretty the cool (the older version, not the newest one)

What is the worst car?

Manufacturers have to concentrate to build a bad car nowadays. The supercars of the 1960's, e.g. the Jaguar e-Type, were fantastic looking vehicles, but try and drive one and they are awful. However the vast majority of modern cars all drive well. It is scary to think that kids today have more power in their Ford Ka 1.1 than the supercars of the 60s.

Do you think diving licences for the inexperienced should be restricted?

It would be a nightmare to police if it was to complicated, but I do think that they should be restricted to nothing over 1.1 until they have 2 years experience. Some people say that the 'big engine pulls you out of trouble', but it is the same big engine that has got you into trouble to begin with.

Merry Christmas



Merry Christmas to all our members
and readers

Quiz Page

The Winter Coffee Time Quiz – ‘What did they drive?’

1. What vehicle did Hitler drive?
2. The car singer Marc Bolan died in?
3. What car did architect Norman Foster design?
4. What car does TV's Inspector Linley drive?
5. What car did Miami Voce's James Crocket drive?
6. What car was John F Kennedy travelling when he was shot?
7. In Life on Mars what car did Gene Hunt drive?
8. In 1979 what type of car did Andy Warhol decorate?
9. What car does TV's Lt Colombo drive?
10. What car starred in the 1953 film Genevieve?
11. What car did Dustin Hoffman drive in The Graduate?
12. What car did James Dean lose his life in?
13. What car did Prince sing about in 1983?
14. What type of car did Jasper Conran have a design influence on?
15. What did James Bond drive in Goldfinger?
16. What car did Endeavour Morse drive?
17. What car was Grace Kelly in when she died?
18. What car did Leonid Brezhnev drive around in?
19. What car did Wilson picket sing about (1966)?
20. What was James Bond's car in The Spy Who Loved Me?

The Autumn Coffee Time Quiz (no 88) answers

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. 715 | 11. Between 250,000 and 500,000. |
| 2. 11 | 12. 2,200 approx |
| 3. 171,476 current words, 47,156 obsolete words, 9,000 derivative words | 13. over 31,000 miles |
| 4. 17 | 14. 23 hours 39 minutes and 35 seconds |
| 5. 50 | 15. 91 miles |
| 6. 25,947 (but this changing on an almost daily basis) | 16. 8 yards |
| 7. Men = 2,500, women 2,000 | 17. 6,861,098,468 |
| 8. 490 | 18. 11 years |
| 9. Nine. | 19. about 19,491 miles |
| 10. 6 (6 arms and 2 legs) | 20. GB |



MOTORWAYS !

The 17th October dawned bright – but cold! Some intrepid observers were about bright and early to set up the mobile unit for the Group's very first Motorway Driving Day. The brain child of John Norrie and Steve Smith, this was a joint venture between the Group and Northamptonshire Police. Aimed at members of the public, it was marketed as an ideal way for them to overcome any fears they may have of driving on the motorway, either by having a demonstration drive in a police car, or being taken onto the motorway in their own car accompanied by an observer, or (as it turned out), both!

We had a very good turn out with almost every Observer turning up. Northamptonshire Police had lent us two marked and two unmarked vehicles. Along with the vehicles we had Sergeant Andy Hunt of the Force's Driving School and PC Marc Hales an operational officer, to drive the marked vehicles, whilst Steve Smith (Force Driving School) and John Norrie drove the unmarked vehicles.



Photo:
Graham Wallace

During the lull before the members of the public started turning up, some of us had the chance to go out in either the marked or unmarked vehicle, and I opted for the unmarked driven by Steve. During the drive Steve did a commentary highlighting tips and techniques that the observers could pass onto members of the public, and I learnt many things, for instance if you are overtaking on the motorway, if you will get to the next vehicle to overtake roughly 18-20 seconds time it is better to remain in the overtaking lane rather than continually moving in/out (unless there are vehicles waiting behind to overtake you).

There was a steady trade during the day, with most people opting to go out in the marked cars (thank you Andy and Marc for doing such a sterling job for us). Many of these individuals then wanted to go out in their own vehicles with an observer so they could try out the techniques they had just learnt. This demonstrated their commitment to improving their driving rather than turning up just to go out in a police car.

Everyone that came back was full of praise for the experience. Lorraine Dean from Northampton said it was "absolutely fantastic". Lorraine explained "we all consider ourselves to be good drivers, and I do a lot of driving and think it is important to constantly question things. The police officer did an excellent commentary, pointing out things

I would not have realised, and I will now try and use this in my own driving”.

Sharon Joynes was also very impressed, saying “I don’t know where he got the acceleration from down the slip-road – it was lovely!”. She said that she was quite surprised to learn that “you don’t always need to indicate when returning to the left hand lane, unless other drivers may benefit”. Sharon also commented on the way that all the other drivers moved out of the way of the marked police car!

Many thanks from the Group to Northamptonshire police, especially to Andy Hunt and Marc Hales, who were kept very busy during the day.





Photo: Graham Wallace

Caption Competition



So what is going on here? Send entries to the editor (postal or electronic).

Northampton Advanced Motorists

www.iamnpton.org.uk

Affiliated to **The Institute of Advanced Motorists**

President : Inspector Nigel Rickaby, Roads Policing Unit, Operations Dept, 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 DVDs available for Loan

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

- ⑨ **Ultimate Driving Craft.** An excellent DVD by Chris Gilbert, ex Metropolitan Police driving instructor, and instructor to the Royal Family. It includes how to build up a commentary, observation skills and many advanced driving tips – *100 mins*
- 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.

Northampton Advanced Motorists

Affiliated to The Institute of Advanced Motorists

Membership Renewal Form

Membership expires on 31st January

Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss)

Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss)

Address

.....

..... Postcode

Telephone

e-Mail

Membership Subscriptions

Individual **£10**

Joint **£17**

Joint membership is intended for two members living at the same address, only requiring one copy of the Group's newsletter. Full membership is only available to those who have passed the IAM Driving Test. Please indicate clearly below either Full or Associate.

Membership required	Associate / Full Individual / Joint
Subscription enclosed	£

Please make cheques payable to:

Northampton Advanced Motorists

Forms should be returned to:

Pam Durrant,

Wedge Cottages,

East Street

STANWICK,

Northamptonshire NN9 6PX

I/We agree to abide by Northampton Advanced Motorists rules and constitution and have no objection to membership details being held on computer.

Signature Date

Signature Date

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 February 2011** (publish date 1st March 2011), 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.