



# Mid Wales Matters



Registered Charity Number 1109484

## The Newsletter of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists

Web site: [mwam.powys.org.uk](http://mwam.powys.org.uk)

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### Chairman's Comment

I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

You will probably be aware that the IAM celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006. Your committee would welcome any ideas you have as to how we might mark it.

I haven't been able to attend group meetings recently due to knee surgery. Soon I get the second one replaced, but I hope to be back in action for the AGM in March. I am pleased to congratulate Roger Wingfield who has recently taken and passed the IAM Qualified Observer Test. I am also grateful to Humphrey Morgan, one of our Qualified Observers, will be taking over from me by becoming our Observer Training Co-ordinator. As I reported earlier Clive Payne will be ending his stint as our Treasurer in the new year but I am pleased to welcome Mandy Giordano, from New Radnor, to our committee as our Treasurer designate. Unfortunately, David Leppard, our Membership Secretary, will also be stepping down at the end of this year so we are looking for another volunteer from within our membership to fill on this important role. Please contact our Secretary, Geoff Smith, to discuss this vacancy if you are able to help.

Finally, thank you to everybody who has sent good wishes for my recovery.

*Norman Wood*

### Associate Membership Meetings

The group currently runs six "Skill for Life" courses each year. Each course commences with a single evening meeting at which new cohorts of Associates are introduced to Advanced Driving. Some of our Observers attend these and we would like to encourage other group members to attend these sessions. This would be especially relevant to previously successful associates who have passed their IAM Test. It would be a good forum to discuss their experience of the course with new Associates and to pass on their tips. The dates of our Associate Courses are published in each newsletter and they are all held at the Bracken Trust in Llandrindod Wells. Members would be very welcome at these meetings so, if possible, please make the time to attend and put something back into the group from which you have benefited.

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### Talks to Organisations

The group is prepared to give talks on Advanced Driving to any organisations within our region. These have included presentations to Rotary, Probus, Community Transport and the Women's Institute groups. If you are a member of, or have contacts with, similar organisations that would be interested in such a presentation to a meeting of their membership please contact our Secretary.

This Newsletter is a forum for tips, anecdotes and comment from our membership. It is your voice to each other as much as it is to inform you of what the group is doing.

The Editor welcomes articles and letters for publication in this newsletter. Please note that all such contributions must have the full identity of the writer (not necessarily for publication) and a contact telephone number. Articles are accepted on the condition that they may be edited.

## Future Newsletter Distribution

A thank you to those members who have agreed to receive this and future copies of our newsletter electronically. This will significantly reduce the group's operating costs associated with printing, stationary and postage. Only a handful of you responded to this appeal so the committee has taken the decision to save "your money" and email a copy to those members who have provided an email address. If we do not hear from you to the contrary we will continue to issue future editions in this way. If you really would prefer to have a printed copy posted to you please let our Secretary know and we will ensure that future editions will be sent in this way.

## Editor's Spot

I have to admit to being a member of Probus, an organization that only admits gentlemen who have reached the age of 60. I am the local group's most recent and, I suspect, most youthful recruit. Every 3 months we hold an event to which our ladies are invited. Before the main business - lunch at the Metropole - we hold a brief meeting to which a guest speaker is invited.

On the last occasion, the chosen one was none other than Mr. Geoff Smith of MWAM.

As I, obviously, know more than enough about advanced driving (and my wife, Sandra, seems to know even more!) we thought we'd skip the meeting and just turn up for the pre-lunch drink. But then we changed our minds; it would be churlish to stay away, and we might be able to give Geoff a few tips on how to improve his presentation.

As it happened, he didn't need any. His presentation, supported by cutting edge technology, ran very smoothly, and the number of questions which followed were a testament to the fact that none of the venerable old chaps in the audience had lapsed into unconsciousness. And, importantly for me, I was reminded of all the basic principles of advanced driving which I had learnt as a result of Geoff's expert advice. Complacency does tend to creep in, I find, and it is well to be reminded that our "skill for life" needs nurturing through constant application. A little brushing up did me no harm at all.

If you have any comments on the above features or an article of your own, which you would like to submit for Member's Corner in the next newsletter, do, please let me have them. Apart from your thoughts on matters of national importance, I would welcome views or items of news that are of relevance to the MWAM area in particular

## Members' Corner

### **Visit to the Highways Agency National Traffic Control Centre at Quinton, Birmingham on Monday 24th October.**

The group of us travelling from mid-Wales to Birmingham went into cloud base on Clee Hill at 1250 ft. above sea level before arriving at the NTCC. There we were offered tea, coffee and biscuits by Ian Burgess, the Operational Partnerships Manager who gave us a detailed presentation of the work carried out in the building.

The aim of the Highways Agency is to have safe roads, reliable journeys, informed travellers and, as a consequence, improved journey times and less disruption caused by major incidents and road-works. In this way it can influence our decisions before we take to the road. The Agency manages 4,850 miles of motorways and trunk roads in England and the network carries two thirds of all freight in the country. Pause for a moment and think about that! Money to run the whole show is through a ten year Private Finance Initiative contract worth £160 million. Policy is set by the HA and implemented by their contractors, Traffic Information Services.

Mr Burgess explained how the NTCC works. It collects information from sources including the police, local authorities, HA traffic officers, road contractors, CCTV cameras, sub-surface monitoring loops and the weather centre. The HA then analyses that data and passes it on to all their source partners and, of course us, the road users.

Some events are known about and planned e.g. Formula 1 racing at Silverstone, Crufts dog show, abnormal loads, road works and so on. Unplanned events include congestion, accidents, and anything else that might have a material effect on the network for more than 15 minutes. Last September alone

the Agency handled 6,840 such events. Talk about a bad hair day! Their response is as appropriate, for example notifying the relevant police forces, putting messages on any of the 350 overhead illuminated sign boards, locally altering the speed limits, updating their web-sites and telephone services and setting diversions (via the sign boards). Some signboards activate themselves automatically when queuing is detected.

We then moved on to have a look at the Operations room. Our chairs were arranged facing blank frosted glass picture windows, which had us puzzled until Matt, the Operations Manager, pressed a light switch and all was revealed. We could see into his domain - a large room dominated by a wall of TV screens - one very big central screen flanked by panels of 12 screens. All of this was controlled by two teams of 8 staff, each with their own computer and four screens. They work in 12 hour shifts, 24 hours a day (24/7/365) and from here can view the whole of their road network in England.

A few facts. There are 1,010 automatic number plate recognition cameras; 700 CCTV cameras which can tilt, pan and zoom with optical definition precise enough to see if the chocolate wrapper on your dash-board is a Mars or a Yorkie; 1,900 sub-surface loops to detect congestion and 4,300 traffic reporting points.

Should you want further information there are a number of useful contacts:-

websites: [www.highways.gov.uk/trafficinfo](http://www.highways.gov.uk/trafficinfo) [www.paweathercentre.com](http://www.paweathercentre.com)

Telephone service: automated live traffic information 08700 660 115 at 8p/min.

Highways Agency information line: 08457 50 40 30.

This was a most interesting visit and an eye-opener into the technological age where any operator in a room in one building has visible contact over the whole of the major road network. Very cunning!

Our thanks Pat Allen for organising the tour.

*Humphrey Morgan*

## Situations Vacant

<b>Chief Observer</b>	To organise the training and accreditation of Observers
<b>Associate Co-ordinator</b>	To organise the allocation of Associates to Observers.
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	To organise the Groups Membership Records

## New Members

Congratulations and a warm welcome to the following Members on passing their IAM test.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Observer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Tony Thompson	Presteigne	Paul Wilson	Aug 05
Ken Lush	Llandrindod Wells	Geoff Smith	Oct 05
Victor Orehawa	Staylitttle	Martin Backhouse	Nov 05

## Associate Course Dates

<b>Course</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Times</b>		<b>Location</b>
05/6	07/12/2005	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
06/1	25/01/2006	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
06/2	29/03/2006	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
06/3	31/05/2006	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
06/4	02/08/2006	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
06/5	04/10/2006	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
06/6	06/12/2006	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells

## Observer Training Dates

Date	Day	Times		Location
19/12/2005	Saturday	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	Martin Backhouse's home, see below
14/01/2006	Saturday	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	Builth Wells, Co-operative Car Park
19/02/2006	Sunday	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	Crossgates, Knill's Car Park
18/03/2006	Saturday	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
16/04/2006	Sunday	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	Newtown, Morrisons Car Park
15/05/2006	Monday	7:00 PM	9:00 PM	Builth Wells, Co-operative Car Park
13/06/2006	Tuesday	7:00 PM	9:00 PM	Crossgates, Knill's Car Park
12/07/2006	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:00 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
10/08/2006	Thursday	7:00 PM	9:00 PM	Newtown, Morrisons Car Park
17/09/2006	Sunday	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	Builth Wells, Co-operative Car Park
14/10/2006	Saturday	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	Crossgates, Knill's Car Park
12/11/2006	Sunday	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
09/12/2006	Saturday	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	Newtown, Morrisons Car Park

Please note that all the above published dates and venues may be subject to change due to circumstances beyond the committee's control. For the latest information visit our web site: [mwam.powys.org.uk](http://mwam.powys.org.uk) or contact the group secretary.

**Please contact Huphrey Morgan (01597 822082) who will be co-ordinating observer training if you require any further details.**

## Your Committee

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ASSOCIATE CO-ORDINATOR	Vacant	

Mid Wales Advanced Motorists (MWAM) publish this Newsletter to provide a means of communication within the group to Members and Associates. The opinions are those of the Editor and individual contributors and do not necessarily represent the view of MWAM or the Institute of Advanced Motorists to which it is affiliated.