



Mid Wales Matters



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The Newsletter of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists

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Chairman's Comment

It's now almost a year since I became Chairman of MWAM and I can honestly say that I've found it a most enjoyable task. Apart from attending committee meetings, both locally and in various places within our area, I've been to drive-days and represented the group at numerous events where I could help to raise the profile of MWAM. Hard work, but fun as well!

It has been said that being a chairman is akin to being Dolly Parton's bra – always under pressure to keep things together and in the right place! Dolly clearly has her needs, but I've been lucky enough to have had the support of an enthusiastic and very able committee which has kept possible pressure well at bay.

One year as Chairman, but nearly 35 years since my involvement with the IAM began. I passed my test in 1972 in an ex-royal household 3.5 litre Rover saloon, and have always found it a privilege to exhibit the IAM badge on my radiator grill. It's a privilege that has to be earned, and it should always be cherished.

Frank Torrens

Editor's Spot

At the last AGM one of the visiting dignitaries told me that being a Newsletter Editor was one of the less attractive tasks a man might be called upon to perform. "No fun at all," he said, "done it myself. Publishing date looms and suddenly you've got no contributions. What do you do?" Well, I couldn't really say because I've never been in that position; I've always had *something*, whether sent in by some kind member or just lurking up my sleeve.

It would be exciting to be knee-deep in contributions, manically reading through them, drawing up a shortlist and then agonising over the final choice for the next edition. After all, that's what an editor should be doing, isn't it? Here in Mid-Wales things are rather more relaxed, and an editor spends most of his professional life twiddling his thumbs, waiting for the arrival of that exciting phone call or invigorating e-mail which heralds the latest scoop. He sits and dreams. Occasionally his reveries are indeed interrupted by an unsolicited contribution and there is much rejoicing at the desk, but mostly he sits and waits.....

Please send me a few words which might inform or entertain your fellow members. Is there anything happening in your part of the MWAM area that we'd like to know about or get involved with? Have you read anything interesting in the local or national press? If so, please share it with us. The Newsletter is your publication and your input would be greatly valued.

I shall now go and sit at the desk.....

Members' Corner

Many young people who have recently passed their driving tests believe themselves to be far better drivers than they are, according to research commissioned by The Department for Transport. They think that the test bears little relation to the experience of driving and that the rules of the road are irrelevant and not worth observing. Young drivers believe that confidence in challenging situations is evidence of good driving ability. Passing the test gives them confidence which "grows unchecked until a near-miss or an accident breaks the cycle". Many of the participants in the study claimed that driving was a natural talent, which could be demonstrated by pushing themselves and their vehicles to the limit. Trevor Wedge, the chief driving examiner of The Driving Standards Agency, says that young males are the most dangerous drivers but they achieve the best scores during the driving test – "they know what to do but choose not to do it". There is clearly a big problem with attitude and behaviour. Mr Wedge praises the system in Sweden, which lowered the minimum age for accompanied practice from 17.5 to 16 years in 1993. The average number of hours of driving practice before drivers obtained their licences rose from about 45 to 120 and the number of accidents involving novice drivers fell by 40% in three years. The Agency is currently conducting a review of young driver training as part of a new strategy entitled "Safe Driving for Life". Sounds a familiar slogan!

Humphrey Morgan

Mobile phones - new survey by the IAM

THE BIG HANG UP - WHO'S LIKELY TO STILL TALK AND DRIVE?

"White van man" is surprisingly less likely to ignore this week's new laws on handheld mobile phones than drivers of typical family saloons according to a new nationwide survey by the IAM. IAM members across the UK took part in a survey spanning two weekends (1 February - 19 February) to gauge where the hand held mobile phone drivers were most often seen and in what traffic conditions.

It is already an offence to drive while using a handheld mobile phone, but from this Tuesday (27 February) there will be a stiffer £60 penalty and three penalty points.

Since 2003 there have been more than 250,000 prosecutions. Incidents of drivers using handheld phones were noted over a 19 day period by IAM members. The survey covered all classes of vehicle, at different times of day and in different traffic conditions. By type of vehicles, the sample was 674.

Drivers of family cars were most likely to offend (145 reported incidents or 21.5 per cent of the total vehicles counted) followed by light commercials or vans (120 reported incidents or 17.8 per cent).

Drivers of sports and high performance cars were least likely to commit the offence, with only 42 reports (6.2 per cent). The other categories were 4x4s, (85 reports or 12.6 per cent) other commercial vehicles (69 reports or 10.2 per cent) large/executive cars (111 reports or 16.5 per cent) and small family cars (102 reports or 15.1 per cent). The survey also revealed that drivers are more likely to use the handheld mobile while in free flowing traffic (334 incidents) rather than stationary or semi-stationary traffic in heavy congestion (78 incidents). Drivers not affected by the morning and evening rush hours were more likely to pick up the handheld phone with 220 reports compared to peak morning rush (95 reports).

"The message must be 'switch off before you drive off' and that applies just as much on the school run as it does to white van man," said IAM Chief Examiner Peter Rodger.

"You are four times more likely to crash when you are on a mobile phone. And the IAM has for several years advised caution when using hands-free kit as an alternative: crucially, your attention is still divided," he said. "The consequences of distraction - be it a crash or a fine and points - are just as devastating whether by a hands-free or hand held phone," he said.

The North West was the region with the highest incidence (with nearly 30 per cent of the total reported incidents) while in London and the South East, just 20 per cent of incidents involved vans, slightly below the national average.

Annual General Meeting

You are cordially invited by the Group Committee to the 3rd Annual General Meeting of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists which is being held at 2:00pm on Saturday 10th March 2007 at Powys County Hall, Llandrindod Wells. This is to enable the Trustees of the Group to present their Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2006 for approval by the Group Members and to conduct an election.

This is your opportunity to find out how we have spent your money and to question the committee on their activities. We are nothing without our members and we need your support and guidance on what we should be doing for the groups' and your benefit. If you don't like what we are doing come along and say so, if you do, also please come and let us know. Your continued support is appreciated and we would encourage as many members as possible to become involved in the running of the group. We would welcome new committee members who are able to donate their time and energies to the future success of the group. We also need additional Observers who will be trained to assist new Associates. If you feel that you cannot play an active role please continue your financial support by renewing your membership of MWAM. A Formal Notice for the AGM and Nomination forms have been sent to members who do not have computer access and copies are available for download from our website for those with this facility. If you have not received these or you would like a printed copy please contact the secretary.


Geoff Smith

Situations Vacant

Chief Observer To organise the training and accreditation of observers
Associate Co-ordinator To organise the allocation of associates to observers.

New Members

Congratulations and a warm welcome to the following associates who were successful in their IAM

Advanced Driving or Riding Test 

Name	Location	Observer	Date
David Beswick	Crossgates	Ian Carter/ Geoff Smith	Jan 07
Michael Davies	Builth Wells	Ron Collins	Jan 07
Carol Ainsworth	Newtown	Keith Blanchard	Jan 07
Jennifer Millard	Newtown	Victor Orehawa	Jan 07
Helen Carter	Whitton	Paul Wilson	Jan 07

Associate Course Dates

It has been decided to delete the sixth course which was scheduled to start at the end of the year. In order to allow adequate preparation time for associates between each course we will only be running five courses in 2007 so book your place early!



Denotes includes Motorcycle Course

Course	Start Date	Day	Times		Location
07/2 	28/03/2007	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
07/3 	30/05/2007	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
07/4 	01/08/2007	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
07/5	03/10/2007	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells

Observer Training Dates

Date	Day	Times		Location
17/03/2007	Saturday	10:00 AM	12:00PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
22/04/2007	Sunday	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	Newtown, Morrisons Car Park
14/05/2007	Monday	7:00 PM	9:00 PM	Builth Wells, Co-operative Car Park
12/06/2007	Tuesday	7:00 PM	9:00 PM	Crossgates, Knill's Car Park
11/07/2007	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:00 PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
09/08/2007	Thursday	7:00 PM	9:00 PM	Newtown, Morrisons Car Park
09/09/2007	Sunday	10:00 AM	12:00PM	Builth Wells, Co-operative Car Park
06/10/2007	Saturday	10:00 AM	12:00PM	Crossgates, Knill's Car Park
04/11/2007	Sunday	10:00 AM	12:00PM	Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
08/12/2007	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 or contact the group secretary.

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

Your Committee

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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.