



# Mid Wales Matters



## The Newsletter of Mid Wales Advanced Motorists

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

I AM a better road user ...

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### Chairman's Comment



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This has got to be the most beautiful production car in the world - the Bugatti Veyron. Never heard of it? Well, it's not surprising because it has a price tag of \$1.7 million, and its performance far outstrips the needs of the average motorist. With its 8 litre engine, it accelerates from 0 - 60mph in 2.6 seconds and has a top speed of 253mph - quite handy if you live near Pendine Sands or a stretch of Autobahn! Since its introduction in 2005 just 304 have been sold, so it enjoys something of a niche market. Top Gear has named it car of the decade 2000 - 2009.

Ask me if I need one, and the answer is obvious. Actually, I don't even want one - such a car, like a huge beautifully cut diamond or a Stradivarius violin, is something for the many to admire as an example of excellence and for the very few to own.

What a load of tosh! If I could lay my hands on an unhealthy share of the Euromillions, I'd instantly become one of the few and have mine on show in Morrison's car park!

Francis Torrens

### Editor's Spot

Christmas is almost upon us, bringing the usual problem of what to get for whom. Well, I'm here to help! If you have a problem recipient in the 16+ age range, how about an IAM gift voucher?

Prices start from £15 for the cycle membership voucher and go up to £150 for a place on the very popular track based skill days. As an added incentive, Skill for Life courses, both car and bike, are available at a 10% discount in the run up to Christmas, bringing the cost down to £125.

There are eight different gift vouchers which can be bought either online by visiting [www.iam.org.uk/gift](http://www.iam.org.uk/gift) or calling membership services on 02089969600. They are valid for at least 12 months until the end of 2011.

Whatever you buy, I wish you jolly shopping (something I've yet to manage myself), a good Christmas and an excellent new year.

## IAM at Nurburgring

The last planned IAM hoorah for 2010 was possibly the most thrilling experience of the year. For my first driving experience in France, Holland, Belgium and Germany, I took Francis Torrens our Mid Wales Chairman along for company - on the strict understanding that too many of his jokes might result in him being abandoned anywhere en route and forced to hitch-hike for miles. I am happy to report that all went well - Francis's fear of walking clearly made him practise comic restraint. The journey was straight forward but quite expensive, due to the frequent stops for petrol which my 6.8 litre Jaguar demanded.

The Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> was spent on a fantastic skid pad surface which simulated driving on sheer ice – tarmac soaked with water complete with vertical water jets that suddenly appeared as walls of water. I learnt how to use the ABS to its full capacity and steer around the walls of water once I had mastered pressing the brake pedal harder than I thought was possible. My personal coach was Wolfgang, who was standing on an observation platform as I tackled fast slalom driving between cones. more water walls, more ABS use, lots of drifting round corners applying just enough oversteer to avoid 180 degree spins - Wolfgang watched it all, shouting "Los, los!" into his short wave radio (this apparently means "Go, go!").

Then it was time to go on the largest skid pad surface I have ever seen. A long slope enabled my car to get up to 53 kilometres per hour and whilst I was driving straight a hydraulic ram moved a platform with some force either left or right, only as the rear axle travels on it. The result is a very tail happy car that I had to eventually return into a straight line. My first attempt was more of a Strauss waltz with lots of fast spinning twirls. Finally I made sense of it all; it's quite a buzz when you can get it consistently right. The space needed to correct this and the speed at which the driver is required to act turning the steering wheel from lock to lock is amazing.

After breakfast on the Sunday we visited the Jaguar Test Centre at the Nurburgring circuit. This is where the new models are fine tuned using computers as they are driven around the Nordschleife, a 14 mile test track with 173 bends opened in 1927. On certain days Jaguar closes the circuit to the public and has exclusive use. Prospective car buyers can be given the chance to learn about the car of their choice on the Grand Prix circuit – a much shorter 3 mile loop with safe running out areas, something Porsche, Audi, Ferrari and other car manufacturers have done for many years. After looking at some very nice new cars we had a briefing regarding our fast lap as a passenger in a Jaguar XF supercharged and driven by a Test Driver. Having read and signed the disclaimer we prepared to put on our crash helmets, only to discover that the Ring had been closed due to an accident. We learned that this is quite common because people turn up in any vehicle and pay 22 euros to do one circuit. As long as the vehicle is roadworthy, it can go on the longest and most dangerous derestricted toll road in Europe. All types of vehicle are allowed on at the same time - cars, motorbikes and coaches. Some 12 deaths occur annually, mostly bikers, but statistics are only taken from those that are pronounced dead on the track. Those who die later don't count.

When the circuit reopened I found myself sitting next to Stefan, a Belgian Jaguar test driver. We set off to complete a fast lap, one defined as going round the track in less than 10 minutes. I can't describe this experience giving it the justice it deserves. The track is narrow everywhere, in places less than two car widths. Barriers are 2 metres high with no run out areas; if they weren't there the trees would be hit. The road undulates wildly and the road surfaces are uneven with cambers that are offset. The bends are tight and often blind due to undulations so severe they make a car airborne twice (one requires a 180 degree turn on the steering wheel in midair in preparation for the landing and immediate bend). Each part of the track has a name. Perhaps the best known bend is The Karussel which is a banked left hand bend, rather like the old Brooklands circuit - although this is a tight 270 degree hairpin taken at 90 kilometres per hour minimum. I can say this bend was gone in a flash. The rest of the track with its other 172 bends is just a blurred memory of Stefan overtaking every car in front, and me bracing myself against the seat. I've never been so fast - up to 160mph with tyres screeching when braking, turning and drifting. Stefan is one of 13 Jaguar approved test drivers who have to cover 100 laps annually to keep their jobs. The lap was completed in less than 9 minutes. After thirty laps driven in this way, it's expected that brake pads and tyres will have to be changed - nothing else. I think Francis enjoyed his track run with Stefan, although afterwards, he had to lie down for a couple of hours to allow all of his body parts to join together again!

I'm definitely going for another weekend next year, driving a hired Lotus Elise track car with 1:1 guidance from a professional co-driver during a session which is closed to the public.

Nigel Godman

## Would you believe it?

The average male motorist drives 276 miles each year while lost, because he's too proud to ask for directions. If the research is to be believed, one quarter of men put off asking for directions from passers-by for at least half an hour, with one in 10 refusing to ask for help at all. According to insurers Sheilas' Wheels, this "lost" driving time comes with a price, resulting in men wasting up to £2,000 worth of fuel over their lifetime. Almost three-quarters of women (74 per cent) said they had no qualms about asking for directions with 37 per cent saying they would pull over as soon as they realised they were lost, compared to just 30 per cent of men. However, 40 per cent of the men said that even if they were to ask a stranger for directions, they wouldn't always trust or follow them.

Over a third of 1,000 motorists polled (34 per cent) said they would rather ask a woman than a man for directions (28 per cent). Two in five men (41 per cent) also admitted telling passengers that they knew where they were going when in fact they were lost – compared to a quarter (26 per cent) of women.

"Lost miles can add up and become costly so if you're looking to save on petrol and the pennies, we suggest you plan and prepare your route well in advance," said Jacky Brown, at Sheilas' Wheels.

"Even if you have a sat-nav it's worth having an idea of the journey in your mind so that you don't become a slave to the machine – and end up getting lost."

## Dirty Tricks

A London council has been using covert tactics despite the Parking and Traffic Appeals service overturning fines issued by non-uniformed traffic wardens. Merton council is spending more than £4,000 a month on privately hired cars for traffic wardens in a move they claim is "normal practice". However, the Parking and Traffic Appeals Service called the methods "underhand".

The tactics came to light following a complaint from one motorist - Derek Anderson, 54, who was issued with a £60 fine after stopping outside Raynes Park station, South London.

As he went to buy a permit two wardens pulled up behind his car in their unmarked vehicle and issued Mr Anderson with a fine. The driver, who was not wearing a traffic warden uniform, inspected Mr Anderson's tax disc before instructing his uniformed colleague to issue a fine.

Mr Anderson, who thought the inspectors were rogue wardens, complained to the council but was told they did not have to wear uniforms as long as they were driving and didn't issue the ticket. He contacted the Parking and Traffic Appeals Service who overturned the penalty. Joanne Oxlade, of the independent body, said she considered the tactics "underhand" but the council said unmarked cars were used for their officers' "personal safety".

## IAM Retest Fees

The IAM has issue the following bulletin on the cost of their retest fees.



*"Having taken account of comments from our members, the economic climate and our desire to help as many people as possible reach the advanced driving and riding standard we have reduced the price of an IAM retest to £35 (down from £65) with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010*

*The commitment made to reach test standard through the Skill for Life course is enormous and the £65 retest fee is a barrier to taking the retest. Our aim is to help those who have recently failed the test to quickly and easily retest whilst their advanced skills and training are still fresh in mind, and their local group is helping them with any specific issues identified during the test."*

Whilst our group's aim is for our associates to pass their test on the first occasion we welcome this reduction which, we believe, will encourage those which do not achieve this to persevere.

## 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
Brian Johnson 	Machynlleth	Rees Thomas	July 10
Andrew Cochran 	Anglesey	Geoff Smith	Oct 10
Tina Whitmore 	Carno	Chris England/ Sean Miles	Oct 10



Denotes Car Course



Denotes Motorcycle Course

## Associate Course Dates

Course	Start Date	Day	Times		Location
11/1	19/01/2011	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
11/2	23/03/2011	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
11/3	25/05/2011	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
11/4	27/07/2011	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
11/5	28/09/2011	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells

## Static Observer Training Dates

Date	Day	Times		Location
06/11/2010	Saturday	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
19/03/2011	Saturday	10:00 AM	12:00 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells
06/07/2011	Wednesday	7:00 PM	9:00 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells

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 our Chief Observer Paul Wilson if you require any further details.**

Note that all driving observer training sessions are now organised by Area Observer Co-ordinators who should be contacted for the dates and venues of each area session.

## Your Committee

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