



# 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

The second hand car market can be a treacherous place for the unwary buyer, especially when relying on the vendor's description. I suppose it's to be expected that sellers can be somewhat creative when describing the goods they have on offer, and this is fine as long as potential purchasers are aware of this fact.

As you may remember from a past edition of the Newsletter, I've done a bit of restoration work, and finding a suitable vehicle to do up can be particularly frustrating. I've been caught out a couple of times, travelling long distances on the basis of advertisements and a brief chat with the vendors, only to be very disappointed when faced with the supposed objects of my desire. Fair enough, if you're looking to restore a car you don't expect to find it in perfect condition – a fair amount of wear and tear is only to be expected. What you don't want to see is a pile of old metal that needs saving from the scrap yard. I've never been in such an extreme situation, but I have seen very obvious filling jobs and some pretty amateurish spray gun technique, none of which were mentioned in the sales literature!

So, if you're after another car, for whatever purpose, do read between the lines. Here are some common phrases used in adverts and – all too often – their true meaning!

**Excellent condition** = quite good for its age. **Needs some TLC** = What do you expect for £500?

**Requires restoration** = Should be OK for spares. **Low mileage** = Milometer packed up a while ago.

**Genuine reason for sale** = Yes, but I'm keeping it to myself. **Totally original** = unspeakably tatty.

**Exchange for newer car** = Nobody's going to give actual money for it.

**Quick sale required** = The neighbours are complaining about this old heap on my drive.

A bit tongue-in-cheek, but there's a useful grain of truth here!

Francis Torrens.

### Editor's Spot

At this time last year I suggested IAM gift vouchers as a Christmas present idea, and I'm going to do the same again!

Prices start from £15 for the cycle membership voucher and go up to £175 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 nine different gift vouchers which can be bought either online by visiting [www.iam.org.uk/xmas](http://www.iam.org.uk/xmas) or calling membership services on 02089969600. They are valid for at least 12 months until the end of 2012.

### New Treasurer Required

Our long serving treasurer, Mandy Giordano, has to give up her post in the very near future, and we urgently need to find someone to replace her. The MWAM treasurership really isn't an onerous task – just a matter of keeping a record of our income and expenditure and presenting a brief financial report at each of our bi-monthly committee meetings and the AGM. If you think you could help us out or would like to know more, please get in touch with either Mandy, or Geoff, our secretary. Contact details see page 4.

## Blind spot danger

An analysis of 50,000 crashes by Accident Exchange, a crash management company, has uncovered a 48 per cent rise between 2009 and 2011 in cases where collisions occur when drivers pull out unaware that there is a car in their blind spot.

Part of the problem has been caused by more stringent safety requirements imposed by the European Union. With cars now being built of lighter materials, they need to be reinforced to provide protection in the event of a crash. This has led to a thickening of the pillars, the metal structures between the front and back windows.

A number of manufacturers are now devising new safety measures to minimise the problem. Volvo and Mercedes have blind spot cameras that flash a warning onto the car mirror if they detect another vehicle. Mercedes and Citroen have lane departure warning systems that shake the steering wheel if the car is drifting.

"Visibility and awareness are key contributors to maintaining safety," says Robert Gifford, Executive Director of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety. "All drivers need to be aware that every vehicle has its blind spots and that these will always be different. That is why some car manufacturers such as Volvo have developed blind spot information systems. There is a trade-off between occupant protection and all-round visibility. Drivers need to make sure that improvements in their safety do not compromise the safety of others."

Andrew Howard, the AA's head of road safety added: "Lane change collisions are the result of a number of factors. Drivers need to check their mirrors and look over their shoulder to ensure that they have covered any potential blind spots."

## What's wrong with maps?

A survey commissioned by sat nav app. developer skobbler, which polled 2,000 male and female drivers aged 17-45 on their relationship with their satellite navigation system, found that six out of 10 of motorists have shouted, screamed, sworn at or even lashed out at their sat nav after it sent them the wrong way. Unclear directions, annoying voice-overs and out of date maps regularly tested drivers' patience.

Yesterday spokesman Marcus Thielking said: "It certainly seems that drivers are experiencing a new form of rage as a direct result of the shortfalls of their sat nav device. The sole purpose of any sat nav is to assist drivers in getting from A to B, safely and efficiently, and it appears that some sat navs are simply not living up to motorists' expectations. But it's not worth flying into a fit of rage if your sat nav leads you in the wrong direction. It's incredibly frustrating getting lost, but it's best to stay calm."

The study found that one in five motorists frequently become angry with their sat nav, while it also emerged the average driver will travel 1,292 miles in the wrong direction during his/her life because 'the sat nav told me to'. Three in ten hate having to put up with it losing the GPS signal and a quarter struggle trying to get the device to stick to the windscreen.

The sat nav has overtaken the trusted book of maps as first choice to help you get from A to B, with three quarters of us automatically reaching for our satellite navigation system, while just 24 per cent look at maps. A brave one in five rely on their 'gut instincts' to help them find the way; half use road signs and 26 per cent ask passengers if they know where they're going. A quarter admit that they blindly follow what their sat nav says. More than half (51 per cent) have tried to outwit their sat nav - yet one in five have then ended up lost, and one in twenty have found themselves stuck down a narrow road.

Marcus Thielking added: "Twenty per cent of those polled say that map updates are too expensive, which might explain why a whopping 51 per cent have never updated them. Interestingly, a further 11 per cent didn't know they had to. This is most likely a significant contributing factor towards drivers' frustrations of their sat navs sending them in the wrong direction. Thankfully, some modern smartphone navigation apps now come with free automatic map updates for life. The conclusion we draw from the survey is that whilst sat nav is here to stay, most are out of date, expensive, inconvenient and not very user friendly."

## Misery for motorists as forecourts close

There are now fewer than 9,000 petrol forecourts in the UK, down from 21,000 in 1991, creating misery for motorists in large parts of the country. The fall comes despite the number of cars on the road doubling to 31 million over the same period, according to new research.

Counties in the south of England have been particularly badly hit by the closures, which have created 'fuel deserts' in great swathes of the countryside.

Rural, independently-owned petrol stations have been particularly prone to closure due to the steep cost of fuel on the wholesale market, rising business rates and taxes, and increased competition from supermarket chains, which often undercut the prices of smaller forecourts.

Observers said that the extra miles that drivers have to cover to fill their cars are adding considerable cost to household budgets, which are already stretched by rising food and petrol prices. The cost of a litre of petrol has risen by around a fifth over the last year, adding almost £20 to the cost of filling the average car.

The dearth of petrol stations in some areas is also increasing carbon emissions from motorists, industry insiders have warned.

Eight of the UK's ten biggest fuel deserts are in the south of England, according to a report by Palmer and Harvey, the wholesale company which supplies most of the UK's forecourt shops.

The district of Torrington in Devon has the lowest ratio of forecourts to cars in the UK. Palmer and Harvey calculated that 11,300 cars share each forecourt in the predominantly rural area, which covers 380 square miles.

After Torrington, the UK's biggest fuel desert is Slough in Berkshire, which has 10,200 cars per petrol station. Next is Rushmoor in Hampshire, with 10,100 cars per station.

**These contrast with Ceredigion on the Welsh coast. With 1,100 cars per petrol station, Ceredigion is the most forecourt-rich area of the UK.**

Chris Etherington, chief executive at Palmer and Harvey, said: "These fuel deserts lead to massive inconvenience for the already hard-pressed motorist, and also to the loss of a focal point in communities that have often lost their local pub, village shop, post office or even, in the worst cases, their entire high street."

Mr Etherington said that in many villages the local forecourt is the last retailer left.

In the summer the RMI Independent Petrol Retailers Association, which represents two-thirds of the UK's 9,000 forecourts, said that time is running out for many petrol forecourts. It accused supermarkets of "blatantly" using low petrol prices as a loss leader to tempt shoppers into their stores.

Brian Madderson, chairman of the association, said at the time: "If the situation is left as it is, there will be irreparable damage to the already struggling independent petrol retail sector with many more going out of business."

## Good news for our area!

I have just spent a week touring in western Wales. My travels included all types of surfaces: motorways, lanes, mountains, villages and towns. In more than 600 miles I found one pothole. In general, all types of road surface were infinitely superior to any in England. (*Daily Telegraph reader's letter*)

## In slow pursuit



76 year-old Caroline Turner from Romford was stopped by police after a 17 mile chase at 10mph. Motorists took evasive action after she went the wrong way round a roundabout on to the wrong side of a dual carriageway. Realizing her error she got to the correct side through a gap in the central reservation. Three police cars followed the great grandmother during the "chase" which lasted an hour, but she simply ignored them. The pursuit ended when police closed the A12 and formed a rolling road-block. An officer then got out of his car and ran alongside the offending Fiesta. "I was very surprised when he knocked at the window," said Mrs Turner. She blamed "bad lighting" for her roundabout error. Despite being fined and banned from driving for a year, she plans to get back to motoring as soon as possible.

Thank goodness Essex is a long way away!

## 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
Lynne Millington 	Llandrindod Wells	Geoff Smith	Sept 11
Roger Jepson 	Llanidloes	Chris England	Oct 11

## Associate Course Dates

 Denotes Car Course  Denotes Motorcycle Course

Course	Start Date	Day	Times	Location
 12/1	21/03/11	Wednesday	7:00 PM 9:30 PM	The Bracken Trust, Llandrindod Wells

## Static Observer Training Dates

Date	Day	Times	Location
24/03/2012	Saturday	10:00AM 12:00Noon	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 John Scott if you require any further details.**

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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.